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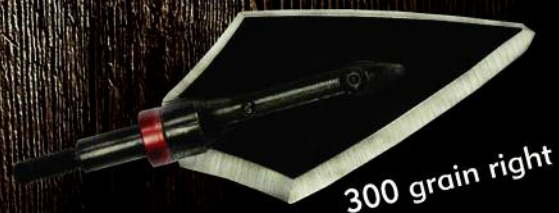
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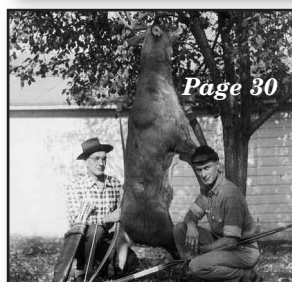
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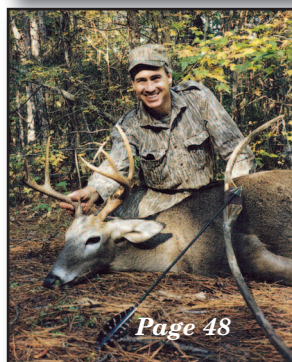
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*On The Cover — Still-life of a selfbow, arrows, and caribou antler.*

*Photo by Jerry Gowins Jr.*







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## This Land is Your Land

**T**he idea has been around for a while now, dating back to the Nevada-based Sage Brush Rebellion of the 1980s. Like a lot of bad ideas, it can be dressed up to look good at first glance: Get those vast, “mismanaged” tracts of western public land out of the hands of the distant, incompetent federal government and into the hands of people who know how to use it right. However, in its current iteration the push to disburse these federal lands represents a greater threat to the future of American hunting than anything the anti-hunters could have come up with in their wildest dreams.

This potential disaster resurfaced as a sleeper—a little-noticed plank in the 2012 Republican Party national platform that openly called for the sale of these lands to the highest private bidders. When I called this to readers’ attention at the time, a lot of you didn’t believe me—until I showed it to you in black and white. (Feel free to look it up again on the Internet.) The idea didn’t fly in that form—it was a bit too obviously selfish. Now the wealthy interests behind it in the first place have re-packaged it in what appears to be a more palatable form: bills in several western state legislatures calling for transfer of these lands to state control. In an age rife with anti-Washington sentiment that sounds appealing, until you take a closer look.

States like Montana—the one I know best, because I live here—are rich in land, resources, and wildlife, but poor in cash. Western states simply don’t have the finances to manage these additional millions of acres. The cost of one bad fire season would wipe out the coffers, at which point these recently acquired lands would wind up on the auction block, which is exactly what the movement’s backers had in mind in the first place. Those buyers won’t be people like you and me, and it wouldn’t take them long to start locking gates, building high fences, and privatizing the game that lives inside them.

Consider what’s at stake. Right now, American hunters of ordinary means enjoy vast opportunities to hunt elk, antelope, deer, and other game species on public land in the West, opportunities of the kind only the fabulously wealthy can enjoy in other countries. That could all disappear with a stroke of the pen, and right now a lot of powerful interest groups are preparing those documents for signature.

Let’s be clear. This is not a matter of Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative. These lands are not currently owned by “the government.” The landowners are the tax-paying citizens of the United States—all fifty of those states. As Woody Guthrie once reminded us, “This land belongs to you and me.”

If some powerful interests get their way, that won’t be true for long. Here in Montana, we’ve already had a taste of what happens when wealthy outside interests purchase old family ranches and lock the gates behind them. Now, we can still fall back on the great hunting available on BLM and Forest Service land. Are we going to stand by and let those opportunities vanish? If you have ever dreamed about hunting western elk, antelope, or mule deer without coughing up half your hard-earned paycheck to rent a key to a gate, you had better join the millions of American outdoors men and women who have already seen through the smoke-screen and said, “Hell, no!”

*Don Thomas  
Co-Editor*



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# Letters to the Editor

Dear **TBM**,

The two articles by Dennis Kamstra and Jason Wesbrock in the Feb/Mar 2015 issue were extremely well done and, taken in combination, they are a great reminder to keep traditional shooting at what it should be. Whoever wrote the statement, "If we're not careful, we're going to reinvent the compound bow all over again," with regards to the trends in technical aspects of shooting and equipment, was spot on. I've always enjoyed Dennis and Jason's work and these are some of their best pieces in my opinion.

Raymond Lyon  
Via the Internet

Dear T.J.,

My condolences for the loss of Larry Fischer. I know he was instrumental in helping you build such a fine publication, and was a close friend of yours.

I would like to sing my praise for your book, *The Traditional Bowhunter's Handbook*. What I didn't know is in there, and done so thoroughly. I've had the book for quite a while and I feel you deserve recognition for such a wonderful handbook. It must have taken a tremendous amount of background work and research, not to mention time, to pull off such a work.

I've subscribed to **TBM** since 2004 and have absorbed all I can from it. I'm 51-years old and have shot bows my entire life. Only after my stint in the Army did I go back to the

recurve bow. I've been making my own hickory arrows from lumber that I hand pick where I work. Next year, I will start making my own Flemish bowstrings.

Keep up the excellent work for all of us traditionalists, and never let your dream die.

Stan Hopfensperger  
Glidden, WI

PS: Is there going to be a Volume II?

Stan—Thanks for the kind words. Indeed, Larry was a dear friend and colleague. He will be missed by all of us.

I have been working on an updated version of *TBH*, but with all the other distractions the last few years it has been put on hold. Rest assured, though, an updated version is in the works.—T.J.


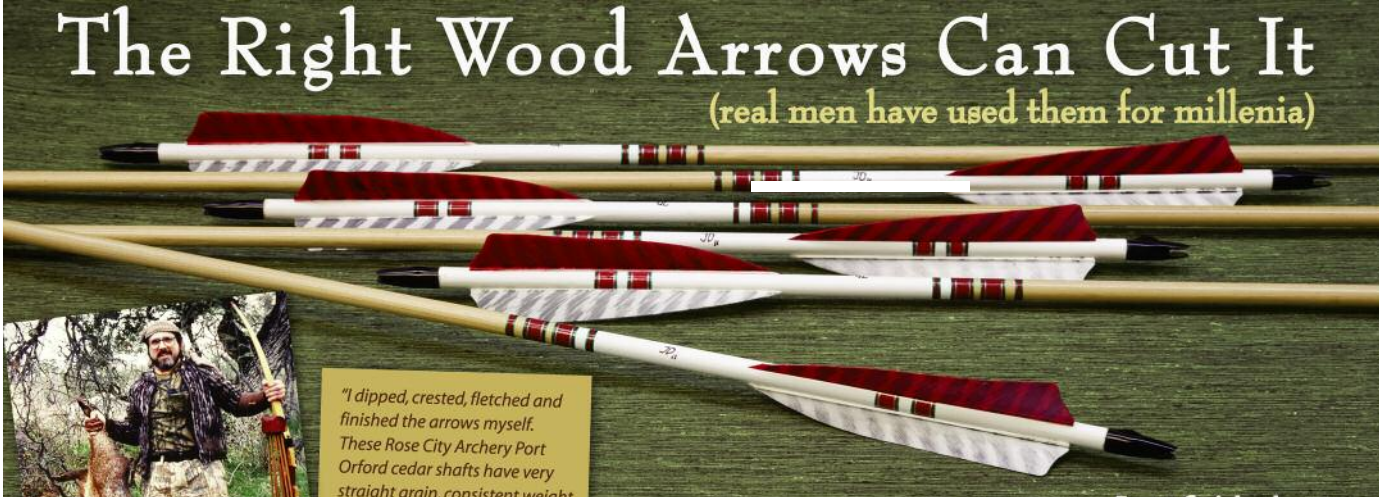
Dear **TBM**,

Hats off to Sterling Holbrook's *Campfire Philosopher* column in the Dec/Jan 2015 issue! He stated the exact concerns I attempted to express in my letter in the Feb/Mar 2008 issue. Now I'm seeing more bows with carbon limbs, and metal risers with cut-outs, etc., but as I stated in 2008, the sight pins, plunger button, and elevated rest concern me more.

Being we're talking about compounds, I have many good friends who use them, but we don't target shoot or hunt together. Right or wrong, we just have different views and

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values concerning archery.

I wonder if Sterling will get negative responses, as happened to me—and from our own ranks. We need to understand that just because one shoots a traditional bow does not necessarily make one a true traditional archer.

I just finished a dozen cedar arrows for my 15-year-old grandson, who by the way took his first deer with a bow on my land with one of my recurves this season.

Thanks again, Sterling, for having the courage to speak up and I always enjoy reading about yours

*Jerry Collins  
Metter, GA*

Dear **TBM**,

I recently had the opportunity to begin practicing with a Bear Grizzly recurve bow my father gave me over 40 years ago. I have not had the opportunity to use the bow until now, and I am working on accuracy and calluses...getting both.

I also just discovered your magazine, **Traditional Bowhunter**, and have bought and really enjoyed the two most recent issues. I'm learning a lot from the technical and how-to articles *Big Small Game*, *Tally-Ho!* and the interview with Grizzly Broadheads in the Dec/Jan 2015 issue. I also enjoyed the short articles *Killing Time* and *White Gold* in the same issue.

Enclosed please find a check for a subscription to **Traditional Bowhunter**, as well as both of T.J. Conrads' books *The Traditional Bowhunter's Handbook* and *Campfire Reflections*.

*Dick Fancher  
Pensacola, FL*

Dear **TBM**,

I get a ton of email to sign up for stuff, which means "permission" for a million emails. **TBM**, however, has a "traditional sense."

Your weekly emails are not about selling me the latest, this or that; it's about what will help me. I look forward to it each week. I have saved years of them. You break the mold of the email onslaught, and I find it refreshing and encouraging. It's a highlight in our weeks, and it helps us keep the spirit and action of archery relevant, and helps enable our motivation to create content that we use in our youth archery programs; teaching the sport, and ultimately, the traditional sense.

I look for the advertisers' links on your email. I buy their stuff personally, and for my programs, which is not much, but people do listen to what I say and use to make their own opinions. I encourage that they find what works for them.

I'm sure you have many life-long subscribers, of which I am just one. Please, keep it coming.

*Jeff Baran  
Via the Internet*

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# No Traditional Guilt

*By Mike Mitten*

**I**n 2011, I was lucky enough to arrow two mature white-tail bucks during a 16-hour period. I know I am fortunate to have had two close encounters that turned out so well in just two days. I can't tell you how many years I've gone without taking any bucks. And sure, it's easier to pass up younger bucks when you have already taken some nice ones before. I realize hunting mature bucks is not for everyone, but it does add another layer to the self-imposed challenges we know as bowhunting. When I get a chance to take one of these great animals, I cherish every moment. However, there are some people in our ranks who tried to diminish my pride with guilt.

It seems to them that hunters using traditional equipment should just be happy to take the first deer or small game animal that ventures past or lets its guard down. After all, many hours of passion have gone into making self-bows, knapping stone heads, fashioning arrows from reeds, and fletching native turkey feathers to shafts using sinew. Like most of these folks, I too have experienced and felt the romance of all these processes. However, I also choose to be selective in my quest, which greatly increases my time afield during the hunting season. I just don't buy the philosophy that the old-time gear we elect to hunt with is so ineffective

and self-limiting, and taking any animal is such a rarity, that our goals should not be as lofty as our modern counterparts.

I have always believed that man is a participant in nature, and that man and nature are one. It's in this vein that humans have freedom of choice; we can choose to take a buck or let him pass to get older. In Illinois we have a lot of agriculture, which supplies a tremendous amount of food and nutrition for wild deer. The winters are relatively mild and less stressful compared to states like Minnesota and Wisconsin. Genetics are very hard to influence in wild populations. So this leaves us with the most easily managed option to sustain older bucks in the herd—simply allow them to live long enough to reach maturity.

I have heard from hunters who believe that letting a buck that is making a potentially lethal mistake pass will in some way weaken the gene pool, as if passing up a buck goes against long-standing theories of survival of the fittest. They suggest that allowing a dumb buck to live, just because of its potential for larger antlers, will affect the health of the future deer herd. I understand where they are coming from,

---

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*A tree with deep parallel grooves that matched that of Tree Shaker's short brow tine and a sticker point that grew adjacent to it. The Osage balls should be taken note of during late season, as deer feed on them after the deep freeze sets in.*

but I feel that my decision to allow younger deer to have a chance of reaching maturity will help balance the overall age structure of the herd, to the benefit of the deer.

If I shot every young, inexperienced buck that I encounter, two things would happen. First, the buck-to-doe ratio could get out of balance, and second, my hunting season would be over quickly. I'm sure that both of these ideas could be viewed as selfish. There are just too many variables that come into play while hunting. I have passed up hundreds of 2 1/2- or 3 1/2- year-old bucks in my lifetime. Only a very small percentage of them have I ever had a chance to kill later. The encounters I experience with mature bucks within my effective range of 25 yards usually number fewer than four all season, and of those, only one or two present me with a potential for a shot. And this is coming from a dedicated hunter who may spend more than 40 days in the woods every season.

I guess I'm not smart enough to predict the outcome of my every action. I just view myself as a selective hunter and know that if I want to take an old buck, I can't shoot a young one. If I want the herd bull elk, I can't tag out on a satellite bull. I won't live the experience of matching wits with the oldest doe in the herd if I shoot the first young one that presents an opportunity. I once passed up 17 bull moose during



a two-week hunt, only to go home empty-handed. But fortunately for me, the following season I took a great mature bull with wide reaching antlers. I have always emphasized the quality of the hunt. The majority of the time I go home empty-handed, but redefining my definition of failure ensures me 100% success.

The first buck I took in 2011, nicknamed Tree Shaker, was 6 ½ years old, with thick antlers, an 8-point typical frame and two short sticker tines. I had passed him up in previous years while waiting for him to mature, but as a 5 ½-year-old in 2010, he proved too smart for me. However, I did find his sheds, adding them to the collection of three sets of his dropped antlers. He was a “homebody buck” that was never seen outside of his small core area.

The terrain I hunt is ungraded strip mine terrain with wave-like spoil banks covering most of the property. Among the thick undergrowth of autumn olive and honeysuckle bushes, there is an occasional volunteer apple tree. In August the apples usually start to drop and offer a good change of food source for the deer, which have typically been concentrating on soybeans or alfalfa fields. These are not food plots, just normal agricultural fields in Illinois.

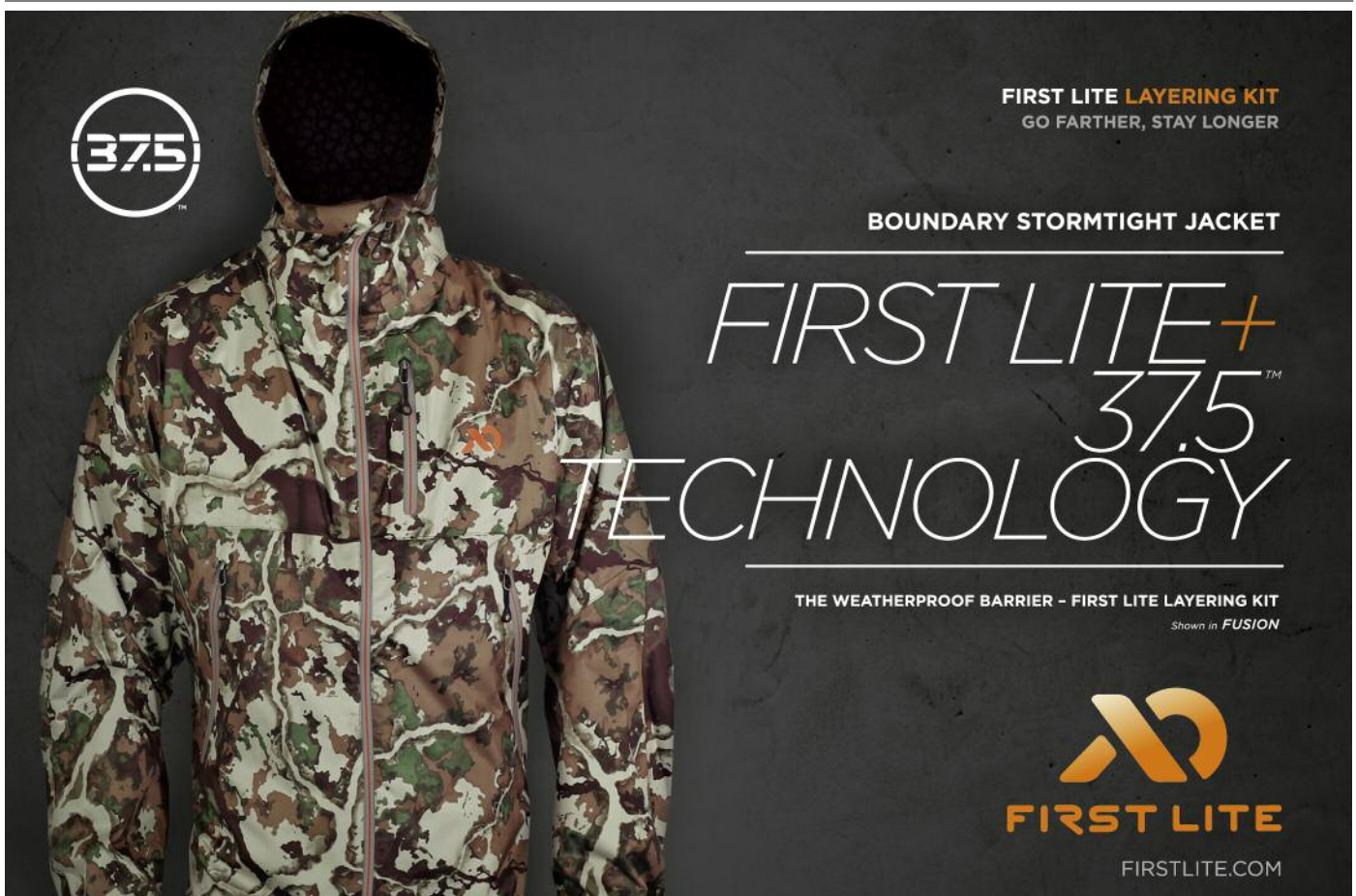
On opening morning just after daybreak, I got a chance to see the old Tree Shaker buck working an over-hanging limb above a perimeter scrape. It is not unusual for bucks to start scraping and spreading their scent from pre-orbital glands long before the true rut. He hooked the limbs of the Osage tree with his antlers and gave them a twist before he moved on out of range. Flanking him were four does and

their fawns, which momentarily pinned me down and prevented me from trying to call to the buck. Before he blended into the underbrush, he gave me a last good look at his heavy, dark brown, antlers, and his neck just starting to fill out. Antler growth draws a lot of nutrients out of a buck, so they really only put on and replace lost body mass during the weeks in September and October prior to the rut.

Fast-forward through an uneventful October to November 4th at 4:00 p.m. With an east-southeast wind, I knew I would be able to sit a stand in a small cedar tree on the edge of the transition area between open grassy spoil banks and smaller ones choked with honeysuckle and autumn olive bushes. I was very excited about my first opportunity to sit this undisturbed site. The trunk was only three inches in diameter at ten feet high, and the stand was strapped in to rest on the cedar boughs. It did sway in the wind a little, but the blue-green needles provided great back-ground cover.

After sitting there for 20 minutes, I heard some sticks breaking behind me. I gave out a faint grunt, but got no response. It could have been a doe. Five minutes later I heard sticks breaking about 80 yards out in front of me, so I wheezed three times. I still heard branches breaking and decided that the sound was not from a walking deer, but from a buck thrashing limbs. I blew on a grunt tube a couple of times and then heard the buck coming closer, thrashing bushes and breaking limbs to let me (a wheezing, grunting buck) know he was coming. He had taken the bait.

Finally, I saw tree limbs bounce and knew where he was.



The advertisement features a person wearing a camouflage jacket, standing against a dark background. The jacket has a circular logo on the upper left chest that reads "37.5". To the right of the person, the text "FIRST LITE LAYERING KIT" and "GO FARTHER, STAY LONGER" is displayed. Below this, the text "BOUNDARY STORMTIGHT JACKET" is shown. The main text "FIRST LITE+ 37.5 TECHNOLOGY" is prominently displayed in a large, stylized font. Below this, the text "THE WEATHERPROOF BARRIER - FIRST LITE LAYERING KIT" and "Shown in FUSION" is visible. At the bottom right, the First Lite logo is shown, consisting of a stylized "X" shape, followed by the text "FIRST LITE" and "FIRSTLITE.COM".



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***Right side view of 6 1/2-year-old Tree Shaker. His aggression cost him his life when he came into my wheeze call.***

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Instantly, I recognized Tree Shaker's form as he popped up over a spoil bank as if coming right out of the ground. This buck, which I watched grow up on the property over the years, looked huge! His neck was enormous, and I knew from the 4-inch sticker on his right antler that he was responsible for all of the deep parallel grooves cut into many of the thigh-sized rubs in the area.

I let out one softer wheeze that caused him to abandon his eastward route and come directly toward me. He dropped down into the bottom of two merging spoils and climbed up right at me. I had the bow up and the lower limb tip resting in the pocket I sewed on the inseam of my left pant leg, helping me steady the bow as I hid behind the wide limbs of the recurve. He kept coming. I hoped he would turn and give me a broadside shot while allowing me some breathing room as far as my scent trail in the wind, but he did not. He heard a "buck" dare to wheeze at him, so he was coming to square the deal.

He ended up looking directly at me several times as he approached. The wide lower branches below my stand helped frame his vision and keep me a part of the tree in his mind. He did not turn, and ended up closing to four yards. I drew and held for five seconds as he moved beneath me. Then I found a large opening through the cedar boughs and released the arrow, and Tree Shaker dropped in his tracks. A second arrow dispatched him, and the little cedar tree began to shake from my nerves. Tree Shaker was still working his magic on me.

The story of the second buck starts in 2009, when my brother David filmed a tall buck with long "Y-forked" brow





***Twister was found at the bottom of a spoil bank. He was the 12th buck I saw the morning after taking Tree Shaker.***

tines on each side. The brow tines also had a twist to them, so we started calling him “Twister.” On opening day I quietly sat through a pouring rain during the afternoon, but as soon as it stopped I started to see deer move, including Twister. He was walking broadside at 28 yards on his way out toward a soybean field. It happened so fast that I did not have time to field judge or age him, I only knew he looked big in the velvet footage my brother showed me, and that he was a buck I was hoping to get a crack at. But after looking at film footage of him after the hunt, I decided this buck was probably only three years old and I would let him grow up a little. The next afternoon I had another close encounter and watched Twister walk past at 15 yards on his way to the same field of beans.

I saw Twister several more times in 2009. In 2010 he added more sticker tines but did not grow the double Y-forks. However, he did maintain his characteristic long, twisted brows. I had him at ten yards during 2010, but again elected to pass him up in hopes that he would add more antler growth. In the summer of 2011, I saw him under the same old scrub apple tree that Tree Shaker visited. He again had given up the Y-forked brows, but had added five additional non-typical points to his basic 9-point frame.

After taking Tree Shaker on Friday afternoon, I returned to the woods on Saturday, November 5th with my second tag. Some people may think this a “hawgish” action after taking such a magnificent buck the day before, but to me it’s all about the hunt, and with the rut in high gear, I just had to be out there. There was a light frost and a slight easterly wind that slowly built intensity during the morn-

ing. I was sitting in a favorite walnut tree in medium cover between two large, dense thickets. I saw two different does getting chased by several different bucks. Using wheeze calls with my mouth and a grunt call, I called in a couple of additional bucks as well. I filmed some of the two- or three-year-olds when I could, but always kept my bow at the ready in my other hand in case a mature buck presented. At 9:50 I saw the 12th buck of the morning pop up over a spoil bank 70 yards away. It was Twister!

Nocking an arrow, I let out two soft grunts. I wasn’t sure if he heard them or just followed a natural crossing pattern over the spoil banks as I have seen many other bucks do in the past, but he was coming my way. I remember he had a slight limp as he climbed up the final spoil. He stood there for a bit, then made a 90-degree turn and headed east on the spoil ridge top, crossing about 16 yards from my tree. I tried to hold for a five-count, but the arrow was gone at about three (which was long for me). I got a pass-through double lung hit, which made tracking him up and down spoil banks through some very thick underbrush a little easier. I found the 5 ½-year-old, 14-point Twister buck lying in a tangle of autumn olive brush. What a great feeling, again!

During the years I hunted those bucks, I also took several does. I did not shoot them out of guilt, but allowed the timing of my hunts to dictate the outcome. I derive great pride and satisfaction in making a clean kill on any animal, so those does provided a wealth of nutrition and numinous value to me.

Individual whitetail bucks have more identifiable uniqueness than most other big game animals. Nicknaming bucks is not a sign of domestication, but validates a connection between a hunter and an individual prey. It does not guarantee taking the buck, or even seeing it again. The taking of the two great bucks, Twister and Tree Shaker, was not the result of a 24-hour hunt, but rather the accumulation of over 35 years of studying whitetails, commitment to a philosophy, sustained passion, and just being too lucky—but no guilt.

*Mike Mitten is a cancer researcher, author of One with the Wilderness, and a co-producer of the films Primal Dreams and Essential Encounters.*



#### **Equipment Notes**

Mike used a 2219 aluminum arrow tipped with a 250 gr. Woodsman Elite broadhead shot from a 67# Tall Tines recurve to take these two magnificent bucks.

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# The Twenty-Year Wait

*By Jim Eeckhout*

Opening morning of the 2012 Utah mountain goat hunt found me sitting in the dark next to a dead bristlecone pine waiting for the first rays of sun to light up the mountainside. I needed to make my final stalk over to a rock outcropping about 500 yards away near the peak of the mountain. I had watched a nice band of mountain goats feed past this spot the previous two mornings. This group contained three nice billies and several nannies with kids. I am not a trophy hunter, but one of the billies appeared larger in both body size and horn length than the other two, and I hoped he would show up again this morning.

As the eastern sky began to lighten, I started to make my way toward the outcropping. If I could make it there

undetected, I would be above the goats and partially hidden from view by stunted pines. Halfway there, a nanny and two kids fed into view. Suddenly the nanny picked up her head and stared intently down the mountain. Following her stare with my binoculars, I could see the object of her concern: a hiker walking the trail several hundred yards below us. I used this distraction to close the final 200 yards. Fifty yards from where I wanted to be, I came around the edge of a giant rock only to be met face to face by a nanny.

I froze in my tracks and tried not to look her in the eye. After a long wait, she began to slowly walk past me only to stop and stare down the mountain ten yards from me. After a few minutes she continued past me, still watching the hiker. Again I used this distraction

to my advantage and made my way to the outcropping, where I removed my pack and began to glass for goats.

Then a rifle shot rang out nearby. I knew there would be rifle hunters in the area, as this was an any-weapon unit. I was concerned that they may have ruined my morning hunt when I noticed several goats coming over the rise to the south, slowly feeding my way. A quick look through the binoculars confirmed that this was the group I had seen the previous two mornings, but the big guy was missing. Could that rifle shot have been for him? Over the next several minutes the goats, including two nice billies, slowly fed around me within bow range, but still no sign of the big guy. Then the goats started to stare down the mountain, and I could see the hiker going back the other way,




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appearing lost.

As I looked back at the goats, I saw a nice billy broadside at 18 yards. Was the big goat I had seen the previous two days now dead from a rifle shot? With a mature goat in bow range, I told myself not to be picky. That's when I heard something running through the rocks behind me and turned in time to see the big guy coming over the peak ten yards away. He ran to my left and came to a stop at 15 yards facing away from me. Then one of the other billies ran up and started a shoving match with the big guy. They never offered me a clear shot, although at times they were as close as ten yards. Finally the bigger billy started to run the smaller one off. I realized that I needed to stop him somehow, so I yelled a quick "Hey!" That stopped him perfectly broadside at 30 yards, facing to my right and slightly downhill. It was time to see if my practice would pay off.

It was hard for me to believe that I was finally getting a chance to hunt these great mountain dwellers. I had been waiting 20 years for this day. Not that I had been waiting that long to draw this coveted tag, which I drew on my third try. But I'd had an Alaska goat hunt cancelled when Alaska enacted the guide requirement for all non-resident goat hunters. My budget did not allow hiring a guide, and I'm a DIY guy anyway. Thus began the wait as I tried

to draw a goat tag in various other states; a wait that ended in 2012.


Where to start? I had never been to Utah. A friend suggested inquiring on an Internet bowhunting site. I eventually made contact with a bowhunter who not only lived near the unit I'd drawn, but had hunted goats there. He also knew a traditional bowhunter who had been successful there. After several phone calls to both of them, I ordered topo maps and spent the summer getting in shape and practicing daily with my Predator recurve from various ranges and angles out to 35 yards. I really had my heart set on taking that bow on the hunt. It was my dad's, and he had given it to me a few years before after a bout with cancer left him unable to shoot its higher poundage. I had been able to take several whitetails and a black bear with it, and wanted to try and surprise him by taking a mountain goat too.

At the end of the long drive from my Michigan home, I arrived at the spot I had chosen to set up my base camp and met a fellow hunter who had also drawn a goat tag there. He too would be hunting with a bow. He introduced himself as Carl and said there was plenty of room for me to set up my camp next to his. This meeting proved fortunate, since Carl lived in the area and had helped other hunters take goats there. Carl very graciously gave me several pointers on what areas to scout where he had been seeing goats all summer. I thanked him for the info, grabbed my daypack and video camera, and headed out on a scouting trip.

That's when I first found the group of goats described at the beginning of this story. I watched the goats for the remainder of the day and the following morning, making mental notes of their routine. On both days they crossed in almost exactly the same place both morning and afternoon, within feet of the outcropping. Now all they had to do was follow that routine opening morning, and I would be in luck.


That afternoon I was making my way off the mountain toward my base camp when I ran into another tag holder. He asked what I had been doing up there, and I told him that I also held a tag and would be hunting that area in

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*The author with his Utah mountain goat.*

the morning with my bow. He informed me that I was wasting my time hunting up in that basin as it only held nannies, kids, and a couple of immature billies, and that I should look for a different area, leave the bow at camp, and take a rifle to get the job done. I thanked him for his advice, wished him luck, and made my way back to camp with just enough time to shoot a few practice arrows before dark.

Early the next morning, I was out of my tent and ready to head up the mountain. While I was picking my way along in the dark, I inadvertently knocked my bow quiver against a boulder, breaking it loose from my bow. Now I had to improvise by attaching my quiver to one of the straps on my pack before moving on. After the quick fix, I continued through the dark to the ancient pine described at the beginning of this story. After reaching the tree, I removed my pack, took a seat against its weathered trunk, and waited for light, which brings us to the beginning of this story.

With the billy standing broadside at 30 yards, I knew it was now or never. This was a shot I had practiced all summer. I slowly came to full draw, picked a spot, and let the string slip from my fingers. I can still see the flight of my arrow as it buried to the fletching in the goat's side. As he turned to run back to

my left, I could tell that the arrow had exited the base of the neck on the opposite side, cutting a major artery in the process. The billy only went 60 yards before going down next to a large drop-off. As he went to his knees, I caught movement to my right and watched as the billy he had been sparring with ran up and rammed my goat from behind, causing him to spin, lose his footing, and slip over the edge. I could not believe what had just happened! Now my goat was gone over the edge.

As soon as I gathered my wits, I shouldered my pack, grabbed my bow, and made my way to where the goat had disappeared. Peering over the edge I noticed blood on the boulders, but my goat was nowhere to be seen. I had slowly started to pick my way down through the boulders when I came across the fletching end of my arrow. As I was examining it, I heard someone yell, "It's down here!" Wondering who could be yelling this far back in the mountains, I looked downhill and saw my "lost" hiker several hundred yards below me waving his arms. At that point my heart sank; I knew there was no way my goat could have made it through a fall like that and still be intact. I had read too many stories about other hunters whose mountain goats being destroyed in falls.



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The going was treacherous as I slowly made my way down to where the hiker was standing. Even when I was within 20 yards of him, I still could not see my goat because of a small drop off. When I asked if there was anything left of the goat, the hiker shrugged and said it was a mess, but the horns looked intact. I could not believe the sight as I finally laid eyes on the animal. He was dirty and dusty from the fall, but the horns had indeed survived.

As I was admiring my goat, the hiker informed me that I had scared the “you know what” out of him. When I asked him why, he told me he had heard something falling through the rocks and looked up to see the goat tumbling down the mountain. He couldn’t figure out why, as he had not heard a gunshot. We both had a good laugh, and then he asked me who I was hunting with. When I told him I was alone, he acted surprised and asked if I need any help. I told him I was fine, but asked if he could take a few pictures after I filled out my tag. He told me he would and then asked where I was from. When I told him I was from Michigan, he said,

“So you are the out of state tag holder,” at which point he introduced himself. My “lost hiker” was the Fish and Game officer for the area and was glad to see I was doing everything by the book. He kept telling me that this was a giant mountain goat and asking if I had any idea what I had just killed. I told him I just knew that it was a mature animal, and that I was very happy.

Then he told me that he had to go meet his partner farther back in the mountains, and that when they made their way out later that afternoon they would help with any meat that I had not yet packed back to my camp. Talk about a great guy. I told him where I was camped and showed him where I would cache the meat if I had not packed it out. I thanked him as he left and started skinning and quartering. When I was just about finished, the hunter I had run into the night before—the one who said there were no mature goats in that basin—happened down the trail. He took one look at the goat and my recurve lying near my pack frame and just shook his head. He said he could not believe I had killed that

goat with that bow, offered some quick congratulations, and walked away mumbling. I then packed the hide, horns, and tenderloins back to my camp, ate a quick lunch, and headed back for the rest of the meat. As I was securing a hind and two front quarters to my pack frame, the two fish and game officers showed up, took the last hindquarter, and told me they would meet me at my camp later.

That evening, after I made it back to camp, I was stretching out my goat hide to dry when Carl showed up and offered his congratulations. While he was looking over my goat, the officers showed up with the last of my meat. They all then took another look at my goat and kept going on and on about how big it was. I told them I was just happy to get a nice mountain goat with my recurve. I thanked them as they left and made a hard earned dinner. That night as I lay in my tent, I could not stop smiling while thinking about the events that had taken place that day. It had been a lifelong dream to take a mountain goat with my bow, and I had done it within the first hour and a half of my hunt. What a dream come true.

The next morning I rose early, packed up camp, and loaded my coolers for the long journey home, knowing I would miss these mountains and its inhabitants. While making the drive out of the mountains I ran across another bowhunter, who stopped and asked if I had seen any elk. When I told him that I hadn’t and that I had been hunting mountain goats, he asked if I had heard about the guy who killed a big one with his recurve. I told him I had, wished him luck, and drove off smiling as he looked at the Traditional Bowhunter sticker on the back window of my truck.

*First time contributor Jim Eeckhout lives in the “thumb” area of Michigan with his wife and daughter, in a log home he built himself.*



#### Equipment Notes

On this hunt, the author carried a 56# Predator recurve and Grizzkystik shafts tipped with vintage Bear Razorheads.





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**T**he end of each high country season brings an inevitable melancholy. The autumn blaze of color lies discarded on the forest floor. The wind picks at every tiny gap in my outerwear and gives a decidedly bitter nip to remind me winter is right around the corner. The highs and lows of archery season replay in my mind. My legs are tired, but my heart and soul feel grateful that I'm able to get out and hunt! I doubt I'm any different from other dedicated traditional archers—I get a tiny bit depressed at the end of season. The months until the next archery season seem too many to ponder.

After my first archery season closed many years ago, I came to the conclusion that I needed an off-season hobby



# Twisted Sheds

*By Connie Renfro*

to keep me entertained and in shape until I could hunt again. I started hiking around our home in Colorado with my dog—at that time a big, beautiful, strong (and hyperactive) German short-hair pointer named Saddle. Saddle and I had plenty of time to wander the woods, usually in a rather aimless manner, just enjoying the scenery. These frequent jaunts usually turned up all types of “treasures” which I would carry home in my pack.

For those who don't know me, I am prone to carrying home items that I find irresistible—rocks, feathers, strange tree burls, and my favorite pick up—antlers! My husband, Gary, is always questioning why I drag home the “leaverights” (as in “leave ‘er right there”). I am a bit of a collector shall we say, with several tables full of fossils, flint, and antlers. I have brought items home from just about every hunt I've ever been on, sometimes being accused of looking down at the

ground more than looking for the animal I'm hunting. Even though Gary chides me about my pickups, he is guilty of carrying home rocks, old discarded mining items, and coffee and tobacco tins. We both enjoy the random bits of history and nature that you come across in long-forgotten places.

As the years have sped by with many archery seasons come and gone, I have continued my wandering in the woods and have accumulated a large and varied collection of shed antlers. Each time I find an antler, I try to imagine the animal as it stood up from a rest, shook the dust from its coat, and shed an antler or two in the process. I can probably fill the back of several pickups with the sheds I have collected over the years, but I still can't resist the temptation of scooping up new finds with a smile and packing them home to share the story with Gary.

It has taken a long time for me to

realize the full benefits of all my hours in the woods. Not only have I retained some semblance of fitness throughout the off-seasons but also, without consciously recognizing it, I have been learning to be a better woodsman. I pay attention to tracks and scat, game trails, and areas favored by deer and elk when the snows lie heavy on the ground. I watch to see where the first shoots of green make their appearance in the spring, knowing the deer and elk will soon make their way to the area. I may not hunt the areas I hike, but it still teaches me the habits of my quarry, where they are, and what they are doing winter, spring and summer.

Now, you may be wondering, what is the “twist” to this tale? Yes, many bowhunters are out looking for sheds in

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***The author's found sheep skull, which was artistically adorned by her friend, Morgan Montgomery.***





*Connie with a matched set of elk antlers she found.*

the in-between times. I have become a collector not only of naturally shed antlers, but also those sets that are still attached to the original owner. These horns and antlers are the result of a creature meeting its predestined end as

a prey species, becoming sustenance for our mountain lion population.

Call it lucky or not depending on your mindset, but I am happy to live in an area with a solid population of lions. They provide a source of entertainment

and much hard work, tracking them in the winter months for fun, trying to fill a tag, or observing the remnants of their activities year-round. Since most of my hiking is solo except for my canine companion, now a Braque du Bourbonnais named Sage, tracking lions can sometimes give me a queasy stomach and prickly hair on the back of my neck. I will never forget the morning I found a freshly killed ewe bighorn. As I walked up to the carcass to check it out and touched the exposed entrails with my boot, I was startled to see them wobble like jelly. This kill was fresh, and I was pretty certain there was a big cat quite close watching me mess with his dinner. I had an uneasy feeling that I was no longer the top predator in the neighborhood! I always joke that without our brains we would not be the top predator, but it is truer than you might want to admit.

The winter months when the snow is deep and the wind is bitter is my favorite time to look for my "twisted sheds", tracking lions and exploring areas where I have found kills in the past. I have long ago lost count of car-

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*Gary checking out sheep kill while shed hunting.*

casses, but in this area I primarily find mule deer and bighorn sheep. Gary and I were hunting far from home years ago and came across a bull elk killed by a bear, which is not something you see too often. We were fairly certain a cat didn't kill it since it wasn't covered with surrounding debris, which is typical of lion kills. Another time, while tracking a lion with friends, we came across a grey fox that the lion had crossed paths with. It had two puncture wounds, on each side of its head. The lion bit it at the base of the skull and dropped it in its tracks before continuing on its way. I'm not sure why—maybe he considered it competition for food, or maybe it's just a lion's nature. Obviously they don't cover things up that they don't plan on returning to eat.

Gary was out with some friends who were hunting lions when he came across an amazing story written by the tracks on the fresh snow. A few mule deer were bedded on the side of a hill when the lion came down the hill in three giant leaps, killing a very nice 4x4 right in his bed. It appeared there were several does bedded near the buck, but they escaped to live another day. Lions are opportunistic killers, not necessarily taking the weak and sick as is often touted, but, rather, whatever or whoever is in the best position to be killed. In the end the cat was treed. It was a 110-

pound female. The buck would have outweighed her by 2:1 yet he never stood a chance. Mountain lions are incredibly powerful predators.

My ultimate find after 25 years and countless miles of shed hunting was a beautiful bighorn ram. On that cold, dry, winter day I was clambering around in some steep gullies at around 9000 feet in elevation when I spotted something above me. I had been going straight up one gully to its origin, cross-

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**Connie and Sage with a shed elk antler deposited in a tree.**

ing the curve of the mountain to the next gully, and then following it down. This odd hiking pattern is useful because of a lion's tendency to drag a kill down into a gully or some thick brush to attempt to conceal it from other predators and birds. I was wearing out and ready to climb back up the mountain and hike the several miles back to my car when I spotted the dusky brown lump and quickly realized what was lying in the gully above me. I could see the curve of the horn, and from the size of it I knew this was a fantastic find! I was so ridiculously excited that I couldn't bear to walk straight to it, and I circled around the big ram several times, talking to myself and grinning from ear to ear.



Finally approaching the fallen ram, I couldn't believe my good fortune. The head was still virtually intact, both horns still in place on their cores. The ram's head was twisted at a very unnatural angle, telling the tale of his demise. The entrails and meat had long since been devoured, leaving the sunken hide decaying into the ground. I spent a bit of time looking around the area, considering the scene as it might have been with the hungry tom on the hunt and the beautiful ram in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I always pack a knife and small saw in case I do get lucky in my search for twisted sheds. It was a half hour wrestling match, but with my handy saw I freed the head from the spine and soon discovered that these big horns were quite difficult to transport. I had only a small daypack and no rope to tie the ram's head onto the pack, so I hugged his head to my chest and started to climb up to the ridgeline. It didn't take long to wish for a better pack—this thing was heavy, unwieldy to carry by hand, and quite smelly. About a quarter mile into my journey, the horns started slipping off of the cores. Now the smell was growing powerful, and the juggling of head and horns was becoming

painful. I trudged on though, grinning like an idiot. No matter the difficulties involved in getting him home, I had a prize to beat all prizes!

I waited impatiently for Gary to come home from work, my twisted shed lying next to the front porch. As soon as he pulled in I ran to his truck—he knew something was up. I said, "Guess what I found?" He took one look at my face and said, "You found a ram!" I relayed the events of the day and showed him my treasure. It was a great ram in the 165" range, broomed off with a wide curl. For once Gary was as thrilled with my pick up as I was, and he made plans to boil and clean up the skull and cement the horns back onto the inner cores. If you don't take care of the horns, they will shrink up and you can't slip them back down to the base of the cores.

Once the ram's skull was cleaned, boiled, and bleached, and the horns cemented in place, I contacted a friend of ours, Morgan Montgomery, to enlist his artistic talents. Morgan is an amazing artist who has done many ink drawings on skulls for other bowhunting friends. I told Morgan the story of my find, and we settled on a design for the ram head. After an impatient wait, Morgan delivered an extraordinary

#### Author's Note

It is important to emphasize that every state has its own set of rules and regulations regarding shed hunting and picking up lion kills. While it is legal in Colorado to pick up lion kills (mule deer/sheep, etc.), in other states, such as Montana, it is against the law to pick up lion kills. Colorado Parks and Wildlife biologists encourage people to have pick-ups documented. For a variety of reasons (too complex to cover thoroughly in this context), it is against the law in Colorado to pick up *any* road-killed animal, although there are times when salvage permits will be issued to utilize the meat from deer or elk hit on the roadways.

Sadly, just like any popular activity these days, shed hunting is in the process of being regulated in Colorado (and is already regulated in many other states). Too many people looking for sheds in certain areas are having an adverse effect on many species, not just the antlered animals. Elk and deer are impacted when shed hunters congregate in their late winter habitat, stressing and pushing the animals when they have little reserve left for the balance of winter. Species that are sensitive to human encroachment, such as the sage grouse, are a particular concern for biologists in Colorado. Certain areas that are known to hold trophy-class animals (hence, trophy-class sheds) become what I would deem "combat shed hunting" zones that I strictly avoid.

As in any outdoor activity, common sense, ethics, and integrity should be applied when you are shed hunting. When in doubt, check the regulations for your state and contact your local wildlife officer to ensure that you are following the letter of the law.





*Connie with her ultimate find.*

piece of art back to me. The ink drawing is of a big tom chasing the ram down a steep hillside, and it is one of the finest treasures I have ever owned. Gary thinks it's a bit of irony that the ram's final moments are forever etched on his skull.

Years have come and gone, and I continue my twisted shed hunts as often as

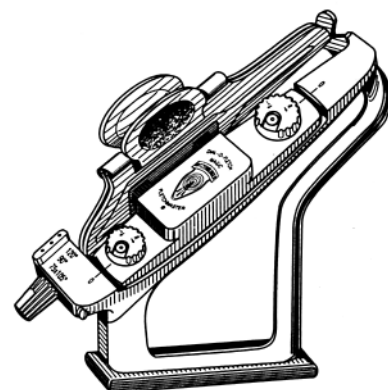
possible. My collection now includes skulls from two bighorn rams and several ewes. We have passed on the horn material from the ewes to friends for knife handles and bow tips. Gary also found a very nice ram, ironically five years later and only a few hundred yards from my first find.

Sage and I continue to wander the mountains at least a couple of days a week, always on the lookout for a new treasure to add to our collection. Each time, we set out with the anticipation of children on Christmas day, taking in the sights and sounds of the mountains. If we're lucky, there may be a beautiful twisted shed or some other unique find just waiting in that next gully.

*Longtime contributor Connie Renfro is settled in as an MRI technologist in Denver after a major career change in 2005. A fifth generation native of Colorado, she enjoys her time afield with her husband Gary and her 2-year-old canine hiking companion, Sage.*



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found the flight of that feathered shaft absolutely astounding, and so began a lifelong obsession.

The Zwickey family operated a shoe repair shop in North St. Paul, where Cliff cut his teeth observing the daily goings-on of small business. He married in 1922, and worked as a brake repairman in the railway yards. Then came a job at the Dobbins Sprayer manufacturing plant, where he became skilled as a tool and die maker. Periodically, Cliff's boss would bring him the competitor's new sprayers when their latest designs debuted and ask him to come up with a better, more practical design. More often than not, he did just that. Still, archery was what was on Cliff's mind.

In 1938, he moved his wife and their infant son into a home built in 1878, which he bought for \$1,100. He then purchased his first machine tool, a drill press, and placed it in one of the two rooms in the house reserved for "monkeying with archery." It was in those rooms that Zwickey Archery took its first steps, even before it was so named—first steps taken just a couple of years after John "Jack" Zwickey took his.

In 1939, the National Target Archery tournament was held in St. Paul. This marked a major turning point for Cliff, for he met people like Fred Bear, Russ

# The Greatest Stump-Shooting Arrowhead Ever Invented

*By Don Kauss (with Jack Zwickey)*

**I**t would be the first time young Cliff Zwickey had ever shot an arrow. The year was 1916, and his Boy Scout troop was camping out on the Rufenacht farm, near St. Paul, Minnesota. Cliff's troop Leader, Osea Phillips, had just finished going over the rules of safety on the archery range when he handed the 14-year-old Boy Scout his bow. Mr. Phillips couldn't have

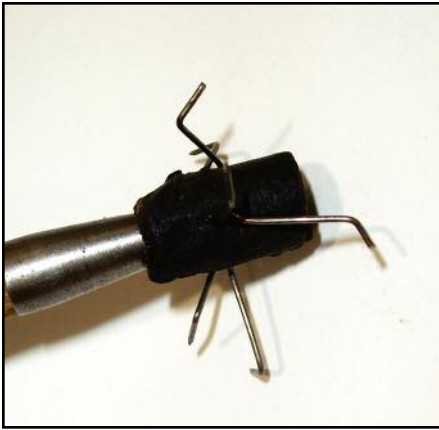
known that he was about to incite a lifetime of fascination that would alter the course of the youngster's life. With the awkwardness that accompanies any first try, Cliff drew back the lemonwood bow, held for a moment, and released. The arrow zipped over the shelf and past the riser, wobbled into stability, then struck the tightly woven prairie grass mat with an emphatic thud. He

Hoogerhyde, Ben Pearson, Harry Johns, Fred Eicholtz, and Doug Easton, who made a big impression by sharing stories of his experiments with aluminum arrow shafts. Later that autumn, Cliff traveled to northern Minnesota on his

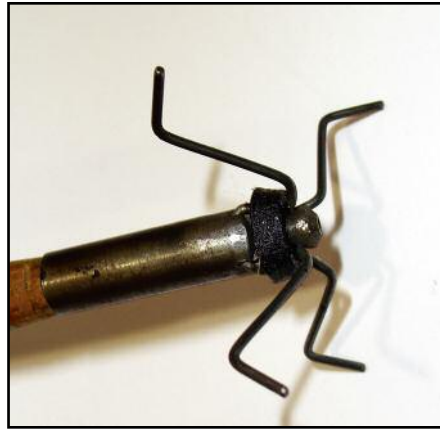
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***Cliff, left, and Jack Zwickey with a 10-point buck Jack shot in 1955 at Camp Riley, Minnesota.***





*Judo Prototype-1. The earliest prototypes included rubber and vinyl in order to achieve the flexibility the design required. These materials proved inadequate over the long term.*



*Judo Prototype-2 with a rubber washer as an option.*



*Judo Prototype-3 consisted of a single, bent wire through the ferrule.*



*Judo Prototype-4 used a punch-press type ferrule, which would have made production much easier; however, it did not stand up to Cliff's standards.*



*Judo Prototype-5. The progression to the Judo of today is evident.*



*Judo Prototype-6 experimented with a U-joint type of ferrule. The hope that it might help flip the arrow proved futile.*



*Judo Prototype-7 had four hooked prongs mounted on an axle that went through the ferrule.*



*Judo Prototype-8 was a 2-pronged attempt, with the spring through the ferrule.*

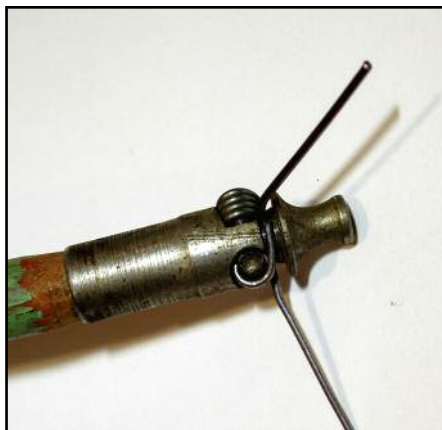


*Judo Prototype-9 was this odd, extended ferrule design.*





*Judo Prototype-10. Here the springs have their own separate grooves.*



*Judo Prototype-11. The springs now move toward an annular groove, where they are in today's final version.*



*Judo Prototype-12. As the design gets refined, a narrow ferrule version was tried.*



*Cliff Zwickey at work designing the artwork that still adorns the packaging at Zwickey Archery.*



*Judo Prototype-13. The design is almost there. This is one of the last versions before the design was finally patented.*

first hunting trip and experienced his first encounter with a deer at close range. He did not get a shot, but from that point on, he was hooked. Suddenly, bowhunting was the exciting new game in archery.

With only a few broadheads commercially available at that time, Cliff realized there was room for improvement. He began designing and manufacturing the prototypes of what would later become the original Zwickey Black Diamond broadhead. In 1945, Cliff quit his job at Dobbins, on the day World War II officially ended, and went into

the full time production of arrowheads. As far as Cliff was concerned, archery was now the prelude to hunting, and shooting at fixed targets on groomed terrain seemed illogical. Cliff taught Jack that the best hunting practice came from roving, and they spent Sunday afternoons walking the fields and forest in Joy County Park, thumping stumps and exploding milkweed pods. Each would take a few shots, and they would spend much of the afternoon searching for the arrows lost beyond their targets.

One day, while looking for lost

arrows, Cliff told Jack, "We can't keep this up. We've got to invent an unloseable arrowhead." The following day, the two commenced experimenting with arrowhead designs aimed at hindering the arrow's tendency to burrow or glance upward upon impact. Those first designs included various arrangements of wires protruding in different ways from heads made of metal, rubber, and even vinyl. The problem was that the protrusions almost always got twisted up or lost after the first shot. The paradox was that the ideal design required the flexibility to latch onto turf and grass while remaining securely attached to the head and withstanding the impact of contact with stumps and rocks. This was a tall order, and the dilemma proved daunting.

The next decade included countless trials of handmade prototypes interspersed with dry periods during which



the task appeared hopeless and they spent their time on other projects that seemed more practical. But Cliff would not give up.

Tenacity had always been one of his strengths. Back in the early 1930s, he had driven to his Aunt Emily's farm in Iowa to harvest some Osage for bow building. He spent two weeks fashioning a bow with some of the wood—hour upon hour of designing, carving, sanding, bending, and clamping the limbs into a beautiful recurve. Finally, the bow was ready. Trembling with excitement, Cliff could barely finish twisting up the string. He took it out into the front yard and looked across the road into the park on the other side, where he spotted a softball-sized clump of grass standing out among the leaves. He nocked an arrow, drew back, and let his forefinger settle into the corner of his smile. The moment he reached his anchor point a furious bang erupted, scattering splinters of Osage in every direction. The only recognizable part of the bow remaining was the handle, still clutched in Cliff's hand. He collected each piece and carried them to the



*Cliff at his workbench.*

trash can on his way back inside. Then he immediately began making his next bow.

At one point in the early 1950s, their hopes were pinned on an "un-loseable" arrowhead design that incorporated

three torsion springs mounted in trepanning holes in a field point. It worked perfectly and endured for years. The Zwickeys even got a patent on it, but in the end only two-dozen of them were ever made. It was just too difficult

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to produce in large quantities. So Cliff and Jack continued to rove without losing their arrows, but it would be several more years until they could offer the same privilege to the general public.

Until 1957, Fred Bear was Zwickey Archery's best customer, using their Eskimo 4-blade broadhead exclusively for his hunting. So it came as a bit of a shock to Cliff when he heard that Bear was unveiling a new broadhead line for sale. He knew the name—the Bear Razorhead—but had yet to see one. It wasn't long before someone brought one into the shop for Cliff to eyeball. Upon looking over the Bear Razorhead for the first time, Cliff immediately dismissed it as any threat to the continued sale of Zwickey broadheads. "No one will buy this thing," Cliff said. "You have to slit through the end of the arrow shaft to put a flimsy bleeder in it. The ferrule isn't a true 5-degree taper, and the tip isn't strong enough to stand up to heavy bone."

This criticism was due mostly to the Razorhead's visible lack of strength in comparison to the laminated steel in the tip of the Zwickey Black Diamond. The fact of the matter, however, was that almost no one *didn't* buy Bear Razorheads. Zwickey had over 80,000 broadheads stashed all over the house and shop, but almost overnight Fred Bear's marketing prowess knocked

them right out of business. Sales plummeted to almost zero. Completely stunned and down to just one employee (Vernon Miller), the question was: what to do now?

After some deliberation, the answer became obvious. Until this point, there had been precious little time for their "un-loseable" arrowhead project. Now it became their main focus. Late one afternoon in 1957, Cliff Zwickey had an epiphany. He went into the shop, chucked a 3/8" rod of steel in the lathe, and machined a field point with a reduced diameter hub and annular grooves. Together, he, Jack, and Vernon fabricated a jig that would coil up small, hook-armed torsion springs of .035 spring wire. The torsion springs had to be small, and have a minimum of five coils each so that the hooked arms would be able to flex 180 degrees without taking a set. Later, a couple of positioning jigs were made to hold the torsion springs in the annular groove. Once the springs were in place and interconnected, a specially designed tool was used to bend the ends of the springs over, locking the entire 4-spring assembly together inside the annular groove and around the ferrule of the head.

This was an interlocking assembly like no other spring unit ever made. After more than a decade of trial and

error, they had finally created a means to mass-produce an "un-loseable" arrowhead. They knew it was perfect even before Jack glued it onto that first arrow. They fired up the truck and headed out to Silver Lake Park, the Zwickey testing ground. There they found an old, half-rotten tree stump, which they shot so many times that only shreds of it remained when they finished. "This thing is perfect," Cliff exclaimed.

Impressed by the somersaulting antics the arrows displayed after the head grabbed grass and turf, as well as the knockout blows it delivered to small game, they decided to name the head Judo®.

After developing this special head, it took two years for Zwickey broadhead sales to climb back to normal. And it took several more years, as well as thousands of dollars worth of advertising and promotion, before the Judo® points began to sell in volume. For a couple of years, they even included one for free with each dozen broadheads ordered by dealers, as a means of getting them circulated. Jack Zwickey believes that back then, bowhunters were just plain skeptical about the spring arms' ability to endure hard impact. In fact, the Judo® is so strong that unless it is misplaced, you may only need to buy one—ever. At least two men (one in Nebraska and one in Michigan), claim to have shot *the same* Judo® on the same arrow for over 20 years. Today, you can watch videos on the Zwickey Archery website [www.zwickeyarcheryinc.com](http://www.zwickeyarcheryinc.com) illustrating, among other things, just how well their spring arms endure impact with trees. (Jack literally chops an 8" diameter jack pine tree down with three arrows, 120 shots each).

*Don Kauss resides in Wisconsin. He has been a packer and guide for moose, Dall sheep, and bears in Alaska, and has bowhunted all over the United States. He is an artist, as well as a director for both the Wisconsin Traditional Archers and the Wisconsin Bowhunting Heritage Museum. The author wishes to thank Jack Zwickey for his assistance with this article.*



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I've never considered myself an accomplished whitetail bowhunter. I've hunted them a lot, and from time to time I've done okay, but considering how long I've been doing it, and the amount of time I've spent in the woods, my collection of big deer is not very impressive. I've read more books on whitetails than most people, and I rub shoulders regularly with guys others consider serious, big time whitetail bowhunters. So, if for no other reasons, I should be better just based on time and association.

My problem is that I think too much. Don't take that as meaning that I'm assuming any kind of intellect on my part, because that's not the kind of thinking I mean. Bowhunting is very much a mental thing for me. It's a feeling, and I've been in love with that feeling since the beginning. And I have to do things in a certain way for it to be right for me.

I don't want anything to change, and therein lies much of my problem. I want to do things the way I used to do them. I want to feel the same exhilaration I've always felt when I go into the woods after whitetails with a bow in my hand, and I don't want to change that. But there are many times more white-tailed deer than ever before, and that has had a huge impact on hunting them.

I love whitetail bowhunting, but it can't be like it was in the early 1960s unless I change some things. I keep doing things that aren't the thing to do—or maybe *not* doing things I should be doing. I'm a very poor example of the evolution of the whitetail bowhunter. Besides there being so many more deer, there's also so much more information available on whitetails and hunting them than there was 10 or 15 years ago, and I'm using hardly a smidgen of it. I'm still thinking that stealth and scent should be our major concerns, but when I look around I realize I've not been paying attention.

Hunters probably know 75% more about how to go about putting deer on the ground today than they did 15 years ago: estrous cycles, rut phases, everything about scrapes (territorial, primary, secondary), rub lines, moon phases, and more data about daily behavior than is available about human babies.

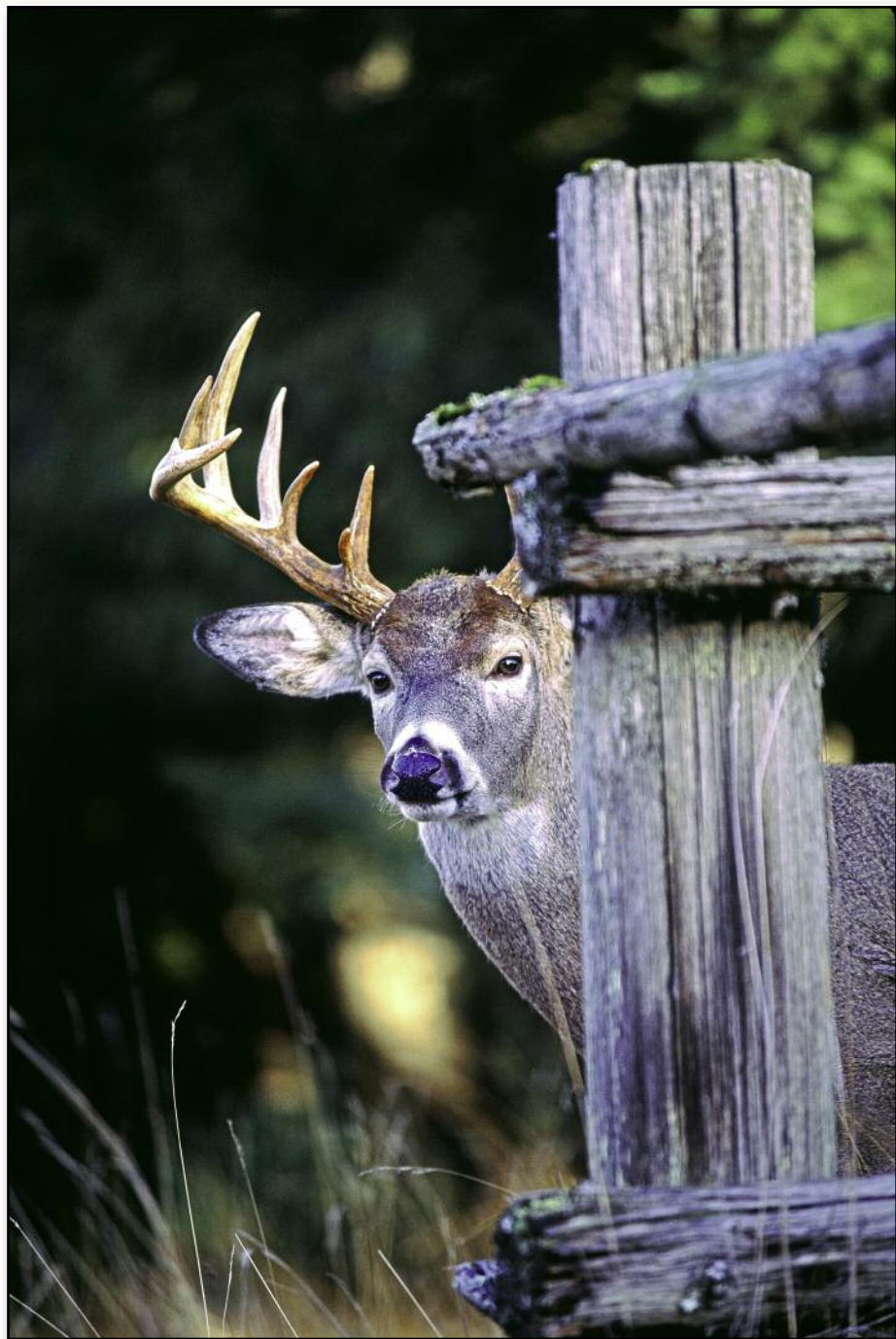


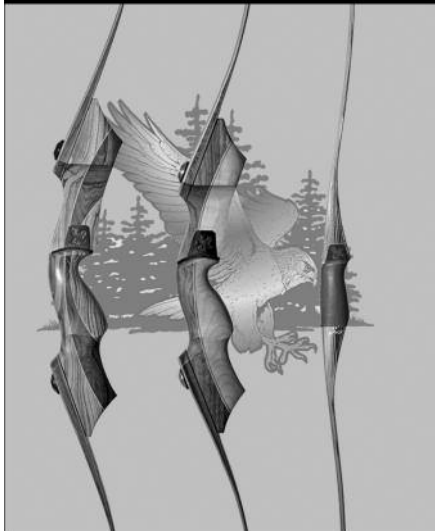
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# Choices and Challenges

By G. Fred Asbell



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It seems that practically everyone wears rubber boots, rubber gloves, and scent-proof suits. And there's the one that still amazes me: treestands 20, 30, and 40 feet in the air. Jeez!

I know a hunter who continually fills his mouth with chlorophyll breath spray so the deer won't smell his breath, and another guy who dumps boxes of baking soda all over himself when he gets in a stand and then fills his hat with another box before he puts it on his head. That doesn't have a lot of appeal to me.

Another hunter will turn around and go back home if he begins to sweat before he gets to his treestand. I try to be careful about scent, but I sweat so easily I'd never get to hunt if I did that. The list of techniques you can use is endless: rattling, calling, decoys, never-fail scents and lures, scent lines, scent drags, clothing decontaminators. I loved the "treestand buddy" (a life-sized mannequin to make the deer think you are in another tree.) I see pictures of hunters carrying a bow, a full-sized decoy, rattling antlers, a huge pack full of stuff, including that garage door

opener look-alike unit for scent control. And the scent-proof clothing manufacturers tell me I must saturate everything with scent eliminator spray before I get to my stand to scent-proof it all? It seems to me that we've way overdone it.

But it's the improved equipment available to the bowhunter that's really changed the game. The compound bow and its plethora of black ops accoutrements have changed everything, of course. But the traditional side has its improvements, too. There are trail cameras, ATVs, bionic ears, and machines that eliminate scent, as well as the contagious and continuing desire to improve and make easier every facet of bowhunting. The good side of that—and there is one—is that you and I get to decide about what we grab onto and what we ignore.

Trail cameras, probably more than any other item, have changed things dramatically. I always had great admiration for bowhunters who scouted throughout the year and kept logs on the various animals' comings and goings. It seems like just about everyone today has a trail camera or two. One acquaintance has between 16 and 20 and has given the individual animals names reflective of their quality and Compton score. It just doesn't seem quite the same as when he glassed them all summer, fighting the mosquitoes and the fading light. With the trail cameras he might get a dozen photos of decent animals on a given evening, with exact times.

You can make the argument, and many do, that there's nothing wrong with watching these animals anytime night or day. I certainly like learning about them. But do you think we've maybe taken this camera thing too far? I'm not being critical or saying it's bad. It seems to me that nothing gives you a greater sense of appreciation for an animal than knowing all you can about him. Certainly no animal has fooled more people than the whitetail deer, and none has been hunted harder. I understand that there's a tendency to keep reaching for something else that will simplify hunting and move us a little closer to being more successful.

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ing technique and equipment is continuing. It seems that we will keep investigating and understanding more and more about the whitetail deer and its mystique, and we will one day enjoy as complete an understanding as is possible with any wild animal. Undoubtedly we will continue to develop ways, techniques, and (probably) apparatus that will further overcome this guy's ability to elude us.

Is that bad? Since the first day I walked into the woods with a bow, I've been trying to figure that out. It's been a challenge. I've lain awake a thousand nights thinking about how to out-fox a deer that was out-foxing me. It's a puzzle that's been a joy to work on. What a wonderful game!

So what's my point? Just this...now that all the pieces are beginning to fall into place, and now that we understand so much about them and have so much more help being successful, some of the wonderfulness of that game is changing for me.

I'm not saying we're being unfair, or that it's gotten too easy. Certainly it's easier, but it's not quite that either. It's that the degree of challenge is being reduced by what I now know, the number of deer, and adding all the new techniques that are available to me. It isn't the same.

Maybe hunting is getting too

detailed for me. It seemed so much simpler before. Now it's beginning to feel like work, like an actual job, and I don't think it's supposed to be that way. Someone said that it was beginning to feel as if they were going to war, what with all the details to be attended to, with a "kill or be killed" mentality prevailing. I always wanted to know the answer to a hundred and one different questions, but I didn't want to change how bowhunting felt to me.

They say there are four stages in bowhunting in which individual bowhunters could be categorized. There's the beginner stage, of course. Even though today's modern equipment has made the beginning stage considerably shorter and less complicated, the beginner stage still exists. Typically, the beginner just wants to kill something. Usually he wants the newest and best equipment and is open to just about anything that will help him be successful.

The second stage bowhunter has probably had some success and begins putting some sort of limitations on his hunting. He may have been in the first stage for some time, or he may move out of it after a single kill. He may now only want to "shoot a buck." He begins to be more selective.


The third stage bowhunter typically has some time under his belt and is the guy who begins telling you how you

should do it. Sometimes this guy has been successful and sometimes not.

The fourth stage bowhunter is about what I call "campfires and good friends." He has probably enjoyed some success, and may well be older. He wants to hunt with his friends and may enjoy the camp life as much as the hunting. It isn't always important for this hunter to be successful.

Keep in mind that these stages are not automatic, and bowhunters may or may not progress through them all. Some bowhunters go through each stage. Some start in Stage 1 and stay there. One bowhunter I know, who has been bowhunting as long as I have, has never left Stage 1. He is only interested in killing something, and if it doesn't involve that, don't call him. Some jump from Stage 1 to Stage 4, and some may even begin there. Some start in Stage 2 (kill something big) and stay there. Lots of bowhunters progress through all four stages. You probably know people in all stages, some for different reasons of their own.

Many of us have moved from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Many of us graduate from needing to kill something to some greater challenge without consciously thinking about it. If a thing becomes simpler we often slide into doing it in a more difficult manner, particularly if bowhunting is more than a casual



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endeavor. Once a thing becomes easy, we look for bigger challenges. We expand. We arise. As we become more successful, be it through technology or technique improvement, we subconsciously find ourselves putting more challenge into it by altering our hunting methods, our goals, or our equipment. That's the way many of us ended up shooting traditional equipment.

Continuous challenge is one of bowhunting's greatest qualities, along with our personal ability to control it. You can continue to add challenges all of your bowhunting life. You can begin as a high-tech guy and end up as a guy with a backquiver, a selfbow and a plaid

shirt. The point I want to make is that as our knowledge, abilities, and success improve, we can—and probably should—modify our equipment and methods to maintain the utmost challenge in bowhunting.

There are lots of ways to put more challenge into bowhunting, starting with equipment. Recurves, longbows, self-bows—each with a half-dozen levels of difficulty—were the first challenge many of us gravitated toward. Some stopped there, some continued on. Wood arrows upped the challenge a bit and some choose them, although others move on to dowelling shafts by hand, with self-nocks, knapped heads, and so on. Several bowhunters I know have stopped using camouflage, maybe just to make bowhunting more personal, maybe to make it more in keeping with bygone era bowhunting.

Some have stopped using tree-stands as an added challenge. One hunter I know will only get in a tree when he can stand on a limb. He feels that treestands make every tree a possible ambush spot, and he likes adding that challenge to his bowhunting. Try still hunting exclusively, and you won't need to add another challenge for a long time. I'm seeing that natural ground blinds are awfully good, and maybe, once you get the knack of it, they are as effective as being in a tree.

Challenges and choices—there are a lot of ways to do it. For example, I personally don't want to use a guide for mule deer or elk. Having someone tell

me to “sit right here—he'll come right there,” takes away a choice I want to make for myself. That's a personal thing for me. I've hunted mulies and elk quite a lot, and I consider being on my feet in that country the epitome of bowhunting. It's the way I want to do it. I find absolutely nothing wrong with using a guide for either species, and I certainly do that on other hunts. It's my choice.

Certainly stalking, still-hunting, and using traditional equipment is putting an extra challenge into hunting and will take some time to learn. But, goals must be attainable, meaning you need to be able to make them work. The same can be said of all challenges. They aren't challenges if they don't make the activity more difficult, but making it impossible is not an alternative. They aren't challenges if they aren't more difficult, but in the end the purpose is to challenge yourself and make the hunt more enjoyable, more exhilarating.

And so it is with challenges and choices. If you rise to them, learn from them, and become a better, more complete bowhunter for it, you've grown closer to it. And what is “it”? It's that thing that turns our crank when we're bowhunting, that thing that gives us the maximum elevation, the thing that exhilarates and calms us simultaneously.

*G Fred Asbell is the magazine's longstanding Shooting Editor. He lives in Michigan with his wife, Teresa.*



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**E**arl Wickman had been an archer for nearly a decade in 1949, half as long as Fred Bear. Even in central Michigan, bowhunting still seemed an odd way to bag deer. Enthusiasts who labored over archery tackle in basement shops were interviewed when local papers ran shy of barn fires, inebriated juveniles, and black bear sightings at lake cabins. The Alma weekly found one story in the big, raw-boned frame of Earl Wickman, who ran a plumbing business but also found time to introduce waifs like me to shooting sports. Lead dust joined gun smoke and stagnant clouds from Earl's massive cigars to turn his basement range blue, as this red-haired giant prepped me for rifle competition. But he was also a skilled bowhunter.

"Bows cost from four to 75 dollars," wrote the reporter who spoke with Wickman, "while arrows range from six to 10 dollars per dozen. Earl makes his own for about 16 cents each."

Those, as they say, were the days.

Earl, now 92, still admires longbows and recurves. He's owned quite a few, including early Bear bows. Earl met Fred Bear in Detroit "soon after I got out of the Army in '46. That was a year before Fred took his business north, to Grayling." About that time, Wickman bought an undeveloped tract of forest near Alpena. "Deer hunters traveled upstate to hunt. Caravans on the firearms opener were legendary. Bumper to bumper at the Mackinac Bridge."

That span between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron throttled the I-27 traffic bound for the wilds of the Upper Peninsula. The dark woods of the fabled U.P. and its cedar swamps harbored huge deer that lost none of their weight or antler width over campfires. But hunting was good in the poplars between Grayling and the tip of Michigan's mitten too. "I built a cabin on my property. Hunted there for decades," said Earl. "One day, I got a phone call from Fred Bear. He had a guest coming to hunt and asked if they could use the cabin. When I said 'Sure!' but refused payment, he offered to give me a bow. 'Why Fred,' I told him, 'I just bought another of your bows!' Something must have come up, because I don't recall Fred hunting there."

## The Champ

Russ Hoogerhyde, Coldwater, archery expert for WOLVERINE ARCHERY TACKLE interests, has won the most impressive string of championships of any archer of modern times. In all he has annexed over twelve important sectional championships, among them:

U. S. National  
Mid-Western  
Missouri Valley  
Ohio State  
Indiana State  
Michigan State  
Southern States Meet  
(Pine Bluff, Ark.)



# A Bow With A Past

*Crude, cracked and backed with mystery material, it once helped a champ trounce his rivals.*

*By Wayne van Zwoll*

Earl's youth post-dated Art Young's visit to Detroit, where the Adams Theater showed one of his hunting films—an event that reportedly inspired Fred Bear to take up archery. Young later met Fred and shot with him, then left to settle in Illinois. He died there following an operation for acute appendicitis in 1934. A decade later, Fred had arrowed his first big game on film. In the fall of '42 sports-writer Jack Van Coevering of the Detroit Free Press joined Fred to film a Michigan bowhunt for deer. It was a challenge. Cameras were cumbersome then, and Fred Bear still-hunted, sneaking through the woods. The first day he fumbled an arrow to muff the only shot of a long, cold day. Exhausted, hands numb, "I could hardly get my boots and wet socks off." But later in the week their luck turned. A buck appeared suddenly, angling toward them at 30 yards. "In a split second he

saw me," wrote Bear. "I was not at full draw, but I had to shoot ...." The arrow drilled the buck's chest. Van Coevering's camera captured it all, to anchor the first of 25 Fred Bear films that would appear over the next 40 years.

Meantime, Earl joined the armed forces. Posted in New Guinea in 1944 as the Allies prepared for D-Day, Wickman used his off-time to whittle arrows from packing crates. "Those boards were straight-grained Doug-fir. Ideal shaft material." He shaved a bow from a sapling and hunted in the jungle for wild pigs. "Didn't kill any, but it was great fun!" (Returning at age 80, this time with a Bear takedown, Earl would re-trace his platoon's path and find the camp overgrown. Alone, he hiked into

***Beginning in 1929, Hoogerhyde worked in the archery industry. His first national championship came a year later. By 1940, he'd won seven!***





*Leather-wrapped and beautifully laced with a spacer in front (the bow's back), the grip is comfortable in big hands.*

the hills, recalling old times. "The pigs won that round too.")

Earl knew many of Michigan's star bowmen of the '50s and '60s. Floyd Eccleston founded and ran Chippewa Archery in Mount Pleasant, between Alma and Grayling. I remember the shop, and Floyd. "He was a keen bowhunter," Earl recalled. "And a fine shot. Before 1950 he'd laid out a 56-target field course. Floyd had the best broadhead collection in the country. He's in the Archery Hall of Fame." Alas,

Chippewa Archery is no more.

Another of Earl's acquaintances hailed from Coldwater, Michigan. Russell Hoogerhyde, a rangy blond lad with Nordic good looks, grew up in the shadow of the Great War. By age 23, he was hanging around a Grand Rapids archery range. The stock market lost its legs that year, but Hoogerhyde weathered the hard times by hitching his future to the bow. Soon this young man was managing 13 indoor ranges. "Russell won the U.S. National Target



*The Hoogerhyde bow from 1930 has laminated limbs, the strips stacked so all run belly to back—not, as on modern bows, flat with the back. This bow has a set from age and use.*

Championship in 1930," Earl told me. He topped the scoreboards again the next year, and the next. He was beaten by just six points in 1933 but came back to capture the title in '34, repeating in '36 and '37. As Hitler blitzed London in 1940, Russ Hoogerhyde shot his way to yet another championship!

In those days, archery drew spectators. One newspaper account conveyed the suspense: "Russell Hoogerhyde, of Coldwater, Michigan, tightened his grasp on the 1931 title by shooting a world's record round of 698 on 90 hits [to break] his own record of 673.... Hoogerhyde needed 610 points in the second round to set a new world's record for the double American round.

"A large gallery applauded the champion's superb marksmanship," the report continued. "In the course of the first round Hoogerhyde sent 15 consecutive arrows to the gold. He shot two perfect ends of six arrows each, followed by three in the gold and three outside the bull's eye, and then another perfect end." During one of his best performances, Russell beat the runner-up by

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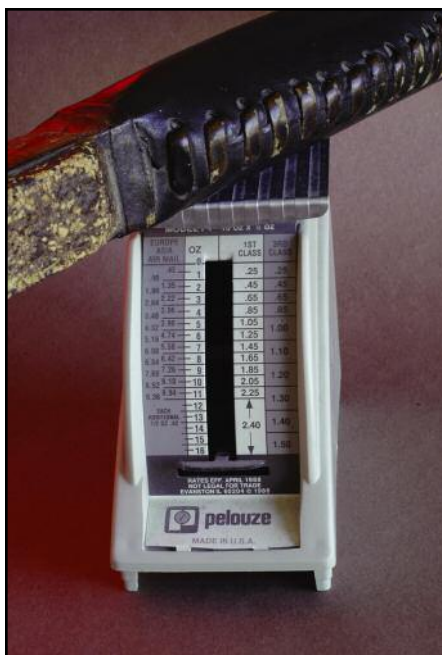
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**The Hoogerhyde bow, reportedly of lancewood, is 69 inches long. It weighs exactly one pound. Russell Hoogerhyde used “self and not footed arrows entirely.”**

167 points with a wooden longbow and wooden shafts!

By all accounts, Hoogerhyde was as disciplined as he was talented, loosing thousands of arrows in daily practice to perfect the form that netted him “the most impressive string of championships of any archer in modern times,” according to *The American Archer*. His

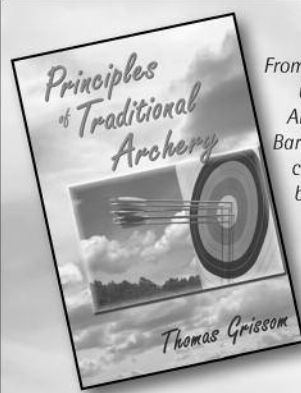


**A small piece of cork on the back above the grip has pin holes – by all evidence a rudimentary sight. Note the groove worn by arrow passage, and the bow’s only crack.**

work for Wolverine Archery Tackle in designing and testing bows gave him access to excellent equipment. But he used stock Wolverine bows and “self and not footed arrows entirely.” A 1930 score sheet showed Hoogerhyde soundly thrashing 68 fellow bowmen with a double American and York round tally of 421-2517, at ranges to 100 yards. “Russ has won every tournament he has ever entered...,” noted a review, “[he’s] a mighty fine archer capable of sustain-

ing the highest ideals of archery.”

The sport’s poster boy appeared in *Time* magazine, August 2, 1937: “Favorite for the title was a onetime Michigan lifeguard, Russell Hoogerhyde, 31, who, after winning [multiple titles], retired to build up a profitable Chicago business in what true toxophilites call their ‘tackle.’ Hoogerhyde’s proficiency with a bow & arrow really started in 1929 when he decided his form was bad. He shot 1,000



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*Left—This backing shows age checking but no splits. It's a thin strip that predates by more than a decade the common use of fiberglass in bow limbs.*

*Right—Tall and handsome, Russell Hoogerhyde was once a lifeguard. Between 1930 and 1940, the Michigan native dominated in target archery.*

Encyclopaedia (sic) Britannica's article on archery...; Captain Cassius Hayward Styles... who, after being shot down four times in the World War and ordered to live in the mountains to regain his health, took to bow & arrow hunting... and Ed Miller, husky Buffalo, N.Y. Customs Officer, whose quiver was made from a moose's foot.... [However], when each of the 106 ablest bowmen in the U.S. had shot his 468 arrows, Russ Hoogerhyde was champion again, 2,865 to 2,599 for Ed Pikula of Cleveland."

Not long before Hoogerhyde passed in 1985, Earl Wickman visited him. "He had lots of medals, but seemed more pleased with the time he had spent teaching others about archery." The



*Russell Hoogerhyde, Coldwater, Michigan, who is National Archery champion. (Courtesy St. Louis Globe Democrat.)*


man had lectured widely and conducted seminars and shooting exhibitions. He instructed for 40 years at the World Archery Center. Those activities, as much as his arrow-splitting accuracy, earned him a place in the Archery Hall

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of Fame in 1972. "Russ was a prodigy," Earl conceded. "Still, his feats with the longbow were amazing. It was such a simple implement then. Crude by modern standards. I have the bow Russell used to win the 1930 National Championship."

It was lancewood, by one report. Tough and elastic, lancewood is used for fishing rods and billiard cues as well. Newspaper images of Hoogerhyde show his bows with narrow, tapered limbs, D-shaped near the leather-wrapped grip. In some photos, the back appears dark, as if overlaid.

I know this because Earl sent me a scrapbook kept by another archer of the era. Clippings include nine of Hoogerhyde, six with photos. And I've had the champ's 1930 bow in hand. It's intact, one small crack marring the grip above the dark cowhide. The nocks, in excellent shape, appear to be of horn. A cork slab, presumably for a sight pin, is affixed to the backing material, a black strip I haven't identified. Twenty years later, it would have been fiberglass—thanks to Fred Bear's efforts in the '40s (see sidebar).

The bow Russ Hoogerhyde gave to Earl Wickman measures 69 inches tip to tip with a flat back and rounded belly. English in cross-section—a deep D—the limbs taper gradually in thickness, from 3/4 inch at their "working bases" an inch and a half from the handle, to 7/16 inch at the horn nocks. They are still 5/8 inch deep halfway along each 31-inch limb. Widest at the margins of the handle, the limbs taper evenly to 7/16 inch at the nock bases. They follow the string at rest, surely due in part to frequent use and ensuing age. The wood limb laminates run belly-to-back, not across the limbs, as bowyers lay them now. The leather about the grip is joined with heavy lacing on the back, where a filler increases the grip's bulk. Russell was a tall, athletic fellow, with hands to match. A groove above the grip, worn by shaft passage, indicates he placed arrows against the juncture of leather and wood. Photos show his hand closed around the grip, his thumb up and forward at about 45 degrees.

Hoogerhyde shot with his body erect, feet at the traditional right angle to the target. He drew with a shooting glove to

### Requiem for the Wooden Bow

With Russell Hoogerhyde's record-shattering performances still fresh in the public mind, Fred Bear used his engineering talents to develop a more efficient bow limb. He bonded aluminum and maple laminates with resin developed by Don Swayze, at Chrysler. Alas, at the 1950 National Field Archery Tournament in California, several aluminum-faced Bear bows failed. Replacing them bled Bear's new company, but Fred did just that. About the same time, a cloth material from Corning Glass caught his eye.

While fiberglass applied to limb backs enhanced bow performance, abrasive action of its cross-running threads made it useless for compression on the limb face or belly. In 1951 Fred and his designers removed the cross-threads by spooling parallel strands through plastic resin into forming channels. Oven-cured, these strips could then be bonded to a bow limb's back and belly. Result: strong, snappy cast and long limb life. Beyond solving a structural problem, application of unidirectional fiberglass helped make bow manufacture a true production-line process.

an anchor below the chin, the string pressing his chin and touching his nose, perfectly bisecting both. His bow arm was quite straight, protected by a laced cuff.

I'd very much like to string this longbow, to feel what a champion felt eight decades ago as the string came taut. I'd like to see the limbs arc and feel them flex, storing thrust. I'd thrill to the sprinting shaft, whistling softly.

But this bow has earned retirement. To risk splintering such a graceful, hand-wrought implement after its service in the hands of a champion would be unconscionable.

"You keep it," Earl insisted, after I'd

photographed the 80-year-old treasure. "You'll get more use out of it than I will now. Someone should tell Russell Hoogerhyde's story."

*Over the course of a long career in the outdoors, Wayne van Zwooll has worked for the Washington Department of Game, the BLM, and the Forest Service. He has also taught writing and forestry at Utah State University. A widely published journalist, he now lives in Bridgeport, Washington with his wife Alice.*



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# Homestead Whitetails

*By Mike Davenport*

I heard a stick break behind me, announcing a deer traveling from the hand-dug pond 50 yards to the north. Deer had repeated this particular pattern dozens of times over the years, working from the north into this ambush between the edge cover of dense hardwoods and an open, grassy hilltop. I was positioned just 10 yards from a deep hole in the ground six feet in diameter next to an ancient catalpa tree that had served as shade for the homestead that had been here so many years ago.

Watching attentively as the deer starting browsing toward me, the doe and her twin fawns got a pass on this day. With November finally here, I was hoping a buck was following them. They

moved past the scattered yucca plants and down the hillside, and I wondered about the previous inhabitants of my favorite hunting spot. As the sun set and the evening glow subsided, I slipped from my tree with a careful eye on the pit, as it was closer to my treestand than I would have liked. Having tested the old well with a stone a few years ago and finding that it was quite deep, I chose a wide exit. As I went past the tree and down toward the creek toward home, I watched a blond raccoon climb its way out of a hole in the drooping catalpa, having now claimed this spot as his.

It is not hard to imagine why there had been a house complete with a well just a few yards from my tree and the pond past which the deer travel corridor

funneled. The spot sits on a relatively flat hilltop with a surrounding view of rolling pastures and woods. An abstract investigation of the property a few years ago had given me some clues that this homestead was occupied about the time Abraham Lincoln was still Senator Lincoln here in Illinois, and the property was still accessed by horse and foot. The homestead seemed complete: a pond for livestock, a view of the surrounding hillsides, a shady tree for escaping the heat, the well, and access by a bridge over the creek, whose only remains were the support logs that still stood erect in the rocky streambed. It was now man-made wildlife habitat, partially grown over with prairie grass, but still a refuge from the dense hard-





*All that's left of a bridge to a favorite homestead.*



*A two-seater outhouse in an overgrown farm within bowshot of one of the authors stands.*

woods and the perfect edge cover white-tails and other animals love.

Homesteads like this one have been a magnet for game over the years for me. I can't tell you how many old homesites I have walked up on in the past while stump shooting, looking for sheds, or hunting, but there are many. Bumping a big whitetail or jumping a covey of quail happened so often that it could be no accident, and that became a constant theme in my journal entries. I wondered why these areas seemed so game rich and feel like I found some answers.

Taking the terrain features, commonalities of the different properties, and location into account, my hypothesis hinged on what these sites offered game: food, water, and cover. The big three, what we as humans need as well, seemed to offer all manner of animals the same after we humans had long been done with the space. This provides the bowhunter an oasis of game within the confines of a funnel or pinch point. Many homesteads were located on the edge between pastures and agriculture fields and the wooded blocks of timber that dot the landscape. Nowadays those homesites offer a small space within a big space, perfect for those of us looking for up close opportunities with our traditional bows.

The terrain features of most old homesteads are fairly similar here in

the Midwest, and I suppose in other parts of the country as well. They are usually located on a rise or hill to take advantage of water drainage. In times of flooding, this kept livestock and homes alike high and dry. Rural homes even now are often built on higher ground, more for aesthetics and the view rather than water control. What are unique in the area I live are the many cisterns that dot the landscape in this rural county. If you find an old cis-

tern, most likely you have found an old homesite. Since the water table is quite saline, hand dug and clay-lined (or in later years, brick-lined) pit wells were used to hold the water supply for families living far from city utilities. For those looking for abandoned home places, a good way to identify them is finding the water source the previous inhabitants would have used. Those structures are either still there or easy



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to find with a little exploring.

When investigating old homesites, old fruit trees also seem to be a common theme, and where there are ripe fruit there are animals. One of my favorites was an old home in the famed Land Between the Lakes WMA that is shared by both Kentucky and Tennessee. While trying to cut the distance from a back-country camp to the road, I stumbled upon a grove of apple and plum trees on a bench overlooking a hollow of hardwoods. It wasn't long before I located a few old bricks in a pile and the founda-

tion of someone's dream home from yesterday. I also ran smack dab into a group of signpost rubs that to this day are the biggest I have ever seen.

I returned to that site over the years to gather some of the small sweet plums that grew there and thought many times about the previous owners. Their life was changed forever when the TVA flooded the valley below to make Kentucky Lake some fifty years prior. I could only hope that they didn't mind me visiting from time to time. Most times I found other animals sampling

the fruit as well, and once I got to place my tag on a beautiful mature buck that had confidently strolled into my ambush at the plum orchard. I even took my future wife there on a warm September day, though she was less impressed with the ample deer sign and more impressed with the rose bushes and peonies that grew among the fruit trees.

Looking at some of the rose bushes, I noticed the deer in the area had expanded their palette to include the flora introduced by the previous human

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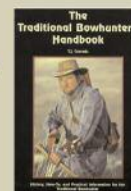


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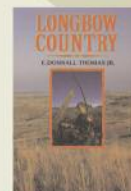
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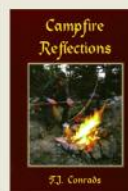
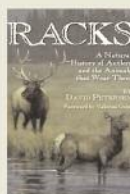


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*The author with his homestead whitetail.*

owners. One of the biggest complaints of suburban dwellers centers on deer eating their landscaped gardens and rose bushes, but in this rural setting they still enjoy such treats. When browsing, a deer doesn't know the difference between a suburban yard and a backcountry homestead. Perhaps the animals just like those types of plants, and these old homesites are a perfect place to satisfy their cravings far away from irate soccer moms and barking dogs. A bowhunter can utilize this unique food source near an old homestead to put venison in the freezer.

In addition to the overgrown yards and gardens of the past providing food, cover is equally as important. Depending on the age of the old site, varying stages of regrowth provide bedding cover as well as staging cover prior to going to food or bed. The edge cover of an overgrown yard that meets a crop field or woodlot is an excellent place to set up an ambush, which is why most of my stands and brush blinds are located near them. The older the homesite the more diversity it offers, and some of the older homesteads offer perfect bedding cover on the edges of terrain changes.

With that idea in mind, on Thanksgiving Day, with family duties completed and a blessing from my wife, I headed to the north end of the same homestead where the doe family group had passed so close by. I knew that even

with the rut winding down there was a chance that a buck might be searching for some of the last estrous does in the area, specifically those that used the bedding cover of the old farm. As soon I buckled into my safety line, I knew it was a good plan.

A young six-pointer cruised past at 20 yards, heading to the bedding area. He walked with that purposeful gait that indicated he had some place to be, and I watched him walk directly into the thicket as I intended. It wasn't long before I heard the methodic leaf shuffle of another deer on the same path as the six-pointer. A glimpse of his body through the honeysuckle was enough to tell me he was a good one. I stood and grabbed my bow as he walked briskly through my last shooting lane. For reasons unknown he seemed to change his mind, reversed course, and stopped perfectly in range of my old Bear recurve.

The shot sounded and looked perfect, and as I watched him closely for direction and landmarks, he slowed his pace and went down in sight, just shy of the pond. The relief of a tough year washed over me, and the happiness of killing a beautiful buck with my "Homestead Plan" took over. I soon shared the experience with my family, as there are some luxuries to enjoy by hunting so close to my own home.

With a wife who was, as always, pleased with a soon-to-be full freezer,

and two pre-teen children anxious to help, we went about the field dressing duties and dragging chores to make it home just as the sun was setting. The experience was validation for me that these old homesteads are magic for whitetails. As I looked around at our open hillside residence, I saw a glimpse of what our rural home could be like in a century or so. I think I would like it overgrown with scattered landscaping gone wild, fruit trees unattended, and a multitude of game animals using the property as their home. Perhaps someday a curious bowhunter would stumble upon this gem, find magic in our abandoned homestead, and wonder about us as well.

*Mike Davenport is a Nurse Practitioner who, when not running a busy rural health clinic and helping raise two growing kids with his wife, spends as much time immersed in whitetails as he can.*




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as a Divine shove, I got both knees under me and lunged upward in shallow water until my upper body broke the surface. Then I clawed myself onto the frozen rocks and instantly felt my strength vanish as the cold engulfed me. I felt as if I had doubled my weight.

Fortunately, I had held onto the rope attached to the raft and pulled it up on the rocks to protect our gear. Dry clothes, fire, and a warm sleeping bag were now an option.

My buddy Bob Nancarrow had watched helplessly as I went under, but now he jumped into action. Handing me my pack containing dry clothing, Bob grabbed his two-man tent and vanished into the dark to find a campsite.

I fumbled with fingers that refused to work, then pulled my knife and cut the straps holding my water-filled waders. Sitting on a small flat rock I tugged at heavy waders, socks, and pants. Removing my quickly freezing fleece jacket, sweater, and shirt exposed wet skin to the icy wind. I couldn't be sure, but the skin appeared red even in the dark. I had no need to add in the chill factor. I thought of lobsters in boiling water. A dry goose down jacket felt like a warm cloud engulfing me. A fleece facemask stopped the heat loss from my face and head.

"Thank you, Lord, for Ziploc bags," I whispered.

# If It Isn't Broke, Don't Fix It

By Monty Browning

**B**y Alaska standards it had not been a cold September night, dipping only into the twenties. It had not been like the night before, when my sinking raft had folded in fast water and I decided to inspect the bottom of the river an hour after dark.

Clawing my way out of 34-degree churning water onto snow-crusting frozen rocks in near zero temperatures, my first thoughts flitted between the intense pain of the cold and the life-saving warmth of my old and trusted down and feather-filled sleeping bag. This

would be next to the last night I would spend in this bag, but without a doubt the most critical.

I had plunged into the dark water head and shoulder first, and my hip waders had filled with water. The current pushed me to the bottom. I groped in the dark for a grip on the rocks to pull myself upright and away from the waiting sweeper, but the rocks rolled in the current and the waders pulled me down. I could feel my chest tighten as muscles lost their strength to the numbing cold. Then, with what I credit

I had the dry fleece pants up to my knees when I realized that I hadn't removed my wet shorts. I tried to lift myself off the rock to slip them off, but my rear end was frozen to the rock! I have hunted in brutally cold temperatures, but this was a first for me and I laughed out loud.

"Hey, buddy," I called, "come help me up. My butt is frozen to this rock."

Bob laughed somewhere in the dark-

***Monty likes to keep things simple, and that means using his hunting equipment for the long haul.***





**Monty still uses an old U.S. Military issued, feather-filled mummy bag.**

ness, then called, "Don't stick your tongue to a frozen flag pole."

Instantly I saw the scene from the black and white movie! We both laughed.

By the time I had pulled on my dry boots, Bob had his small tent up and our dry sleeping bags rolled out. We needed warmth fast, and the need for fire was critical. Our click lighters had failed after two days of rain and two days of snow. I dug through my wet, semi-frozen jacket pockets and found my waterproof matches. The plastic bag was torn and the matches were wet. The plot thickened. I had backup matches, but my chilled brain couldn't remember where I had put them.

I assembled our propane cook stove, dug through my pack, and found a small click lighter that had refused to give so much as a spark on repeated tries during the hunt. I said a little prayer and clicked the lighter. It miraculously sparked to life. Instantly the blue ring of flame pushed back the darkness, and the first wave of warmth brushed my chilled face. Hope had risen like the Phoenix from the little blue flame. My down sleeping bag would do the rest.

Early that morning I had prepared two small thermoses of soup for our lunch, but there had been no time to stop for rest or food. Now, thirteen hours later and nearly exhausted, we sat on our sleeping bags and savored each sip of the faintly warm soup. Life was good.

My old, battle-worn sleeping bag served me well throughout the night, conserving precious body heat, allowing the moisture to escape from my still damp hair and body, and repelling the



**Not one to follow into the camo rage, Monty still uses decades-old hunting clothing and prefers his time-tested bows over new ones.**

near zero temperatures. We awoke to a frozen world.

We had dried our matches by the heat of the cook stove, and Bob soon had a big fire outside on the snow-covered rocks. It would take a couple of hours to reach Bryan Burkhardt and Kevin Dill's camp.

As I crawled out of my cocoon, I left a trail of down and feather pieces. The old bag had seen better days. Silver tape patched a couple of old tears. "Maybe it's time for a new bag," I thought.

As I packed my gear, I read the yellowed label sewn onto the old sleeping bag that had served me well for 41 years. The label read, Sleeping Bag, Mountain, Mummy, U.S. Army 1949! I had bought the bag from an Army surplus store outside Gate One, Fort Jackson, South Carolina in 1972. I was there practicing for the long range shooting competition at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I bought the bag for an elk hunting trip to Colorado. I paid 20 bucks and never looked back. I slept



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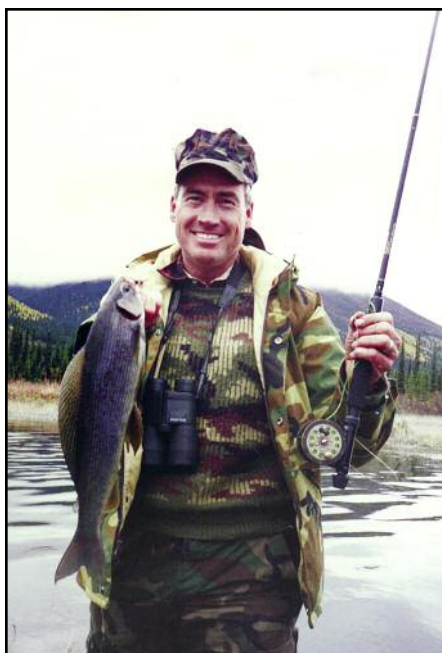
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**Monty with a hefty grayling caught on decades-old tackle.**



**This old Pflueger fly reel still works perfectly.**

more than a full year of nights in that bag.

Back in Fairbanks, we packed our gear at the hotel and loaded the car for the ride to the airport and home. I

rolled the bag up tight for the last time, tied the cinch straps, and carried it to the front desk. The clerk smiled as I offered the bag.

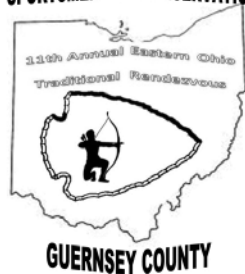
"Know anyone who could use an old, used sleeping bag?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," she remarked with a smile. "I have a friend who could really use it."

"It has served me well for quite some time," I said, "I hope he enjoys it."

I love new gear, and buy what I think

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***This 23-year-old two-man tent has served Monty well over the years, and it has a lot of life left in it.***

I need, but I grew up when money was tight. I was taught to make do with what I had and to take care of my equipment. I have never felt the need to upgrade each year to the new model.

A classic case in point is my fly reel. My stepdad, Bob Gamble, gave me my Pflueger Progress number 1774 in 1961 when I was 13. He had received it from his dad years before. It was an allowance of sorts, because I had to earn it by cutting the grass each week all summer with a motorless spiral reel push mower. There was sweat equity value in that reel.

That reel is old now, but it works just fine and has outlasted several broken rods. It has held the line that pulled in fish from the Zambezi River in Mozambique to piranha in the Amazon and the treeless rivers above the Arctic Circle. Before I was able to hunt, I used it to catch bluegill and bass from farm ponds in South Carolina. The little reel is slightly bent from being tossed out of Super Cubs in Alaska, but I can't remember a single fish complaining about being caught with an old, outdated reel. In fact, they all seemed to enjoy it, because in every case their tails were wagging.

The bent housing on the reel probably occurred the same time a chip of

paint jarred loose from my 1972 Bear takedown bow handle. I do take care of my equipment, but even the most careful packing and cushioning of gear is sometimes compromised when exposed to airline baggage handlers and impacts from duffels falling out of airplanes.

In my humble opinion, the Bear takedown bow, especially the metal handle model, is the finest production recurve hunting bow ever produced. Again that's only my opinion, and that and \$2 will get you a cup of coffee. And it is still as accurate and deadly as it was the day I bought it four decades ago. The classic lines are graceful and beautiful and, in silhouette, a work of art.

My number two handle has been sandblasted and painted and should last several lifetimes. Simply put, the bow works. So, if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

The longbow has been my bow of choice most of my life, and I still hunt and shoot longbows. But unfortunately, those years of shooting 90-pound longbows are over. Forty years of tree work and 20 years of heavy bows have helped me come to terms with what works for me today.

I suppose most bowhunters have their favorite hunting outfit, and to many it becomes a trademark of sorts. Who could imagine Fred Bear without the plaid shirt, bolo tie, and fedora?

For many, that favorite camo pattern, old jacket, or sweater puts us in our comfort zone, like that old, faded pair of jeans. During the mid-1980s, I turkey hunted every season in Mossy Oak's "Bottom Land and Tree Branch" pattern. If you see me this season in the turkey woods, I'll still be wearing the

same pants, shirts, and jacket. More than a hundred gobblers have been taken wearing that same outfit. I still look like a stump, but the stump now has a little snow on top.

The way I see it, big gobblers seldom last ten years, and to a gobbler that has only been hatched less than four years, my old camo is new to them. New camo will never replace hunting skill. If it isn't broke, don't fix it.

My two-man backpack tent is another example. I bought the tent in 1992. I have spent nearly a year of nights in that tent and it still works great. I string a light tarp over the tent to keep the sunlight and snow off and to help keep it dry in extended rain. It works.

Take care of your equipment and your equipment will take care of you. But on the other hand, if you feel driven to order that new bow or hi-tech sleeping bag, don't beat yourself up. Pass that old treasure down to the next bowhunter. He will love you for it.

*Frequent TBM contributor Monty Browning has just published a collection of his stories as Bowhunting: A Passion for Life.*



#### Author's Note

I shared my sleeping bag story with my friend Wade Job and told him about the bag I was planning to purchase. Wade had the very bag I was looking for, and it was for sale. The label in my new sleeping bag reads, "Sleeping Bag, modular, rated to -50 F. This bag should outlast me."



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# One Hundred Days

Preparing for an extended wilderness backpack hunt.

*By E. Donnell Thomas Jr.*

**T**hey say that the bow hunt begins where the rifle hunt ends, and that's generally true enough. But in this case, the bow hunt began much earlier.

The goal: a do-it-yourself August backpack sheep hunt in the wilderness of Alaska's North Slope with my old friends Doug Borland, Dick Robertson, and Dick's son Yote. All three of them had taken longbow rams from this area before. While I looked forward to an

opportunity to do so myself, that was hardly the point. Any sheep taken—or seriously stalked, for that matter—would simply be a bonus. We were going because we love the country, which is spectacular even by Alaska standards. And frankly, we three old men were going because we needed to prove to ourselves that we could still do it. I should have looked at 66 candles on my birthday cake two months before we left, although the little neighbor girls

could only cram a fraction of that number onto the cupcake they baked me for the occasion. Unguided backpack sheep hunts and Medicare make an odd combination.

I'd been into the area twice before, so I had a clear understanding of the challenges ahead. On my first trip back in the 1980s I was still young and tough, but I didn't get to take advantage of my

***Don on one of his daily training routes above his Alaska home.***



youth or the Alaska resident sheep tag in my pocket. Two days after we flew in, my father and I woke up to two feet of snow on top of our little backpack tent. We spent the rest of the week surviving. By the time I returned with Doug in 2001 I was no longer an Alaska resident, so I carried a camera instead of a bow. Bad weather plagued us on that trip too, and we never really got into the rams. But I did make the 23-mile hike from the gravel bar landing strip to base camp, so I understood what I'd have to do just to start hunting. And I'd re-established Alaska residency, so this time I wasn't just along for the ride.

I'd been in my mid-50s at the time of that last trip, and I hadn't really worried about its physical demands. I'd always been active, and I figured that was enough—correctly, as events proved that year. But there is a whopping big difference between ages 53 and 66, as I'd found out since that last North Slope hunt. Some tough seasons had come and gone, including 28 mostly solo days in Montana's rugged Crazy Mountains when I drew a goat tag there in 2006. But my real moment of clarity came on a tahr hunt on the South Island of New Zealand a few years later. I hadn't prepared physically, and it showed when I had to labor to keep up with our Kiwi host, Kevin Low. That wasn't going to happen again—and if it did, it wouldn't be for lack of preparation.

Our traditional bowhunting community is aging. Nowadays, a look around the room at any bowhunting event inevitably reveals a lot of gray hair. This is a natural demographic phenomenon. What we do and the way we do it reflect patience, discipline, and experience, qualities that don't translate easily for the digitally oriented, social media, reality TV generation. I hope they get there some day, but for now a lot of bowhunting is going to be done by hunters who can't rely on young legs to get them up the hill.

Some of us have established means of getting and staying in shape to hunt. But many more have questions—I know, because I field a lot of them every year thanks to my medical background. The “best” conditioning program for you depends on a number of factors, includ-



*The long flight is over. Just 23 miles to go.*

ing your baseline health and the demands of your upcoming season. If what you're doing is working for you, don't change a thing. But I'll take you through the way I prepared for this hunt, because it illustrates some important principles even if the specific details aren't right for everyone.

First: start early. The one hundred days in the title of this piece represents minimum preparation time prior to a physically demanding hunt for anyone over 50, and that assumes you're healthy

and reasonably fit to start. If you're younger or preparing for a less rigorous hunt you may get away with less, but you can't at my age. My own baseline level of fitness was pretty good when I started preparing for the North Slope. I'd been on some lion chases over the winter, I'd hunted quail in rugged Arizona terrain most of January, and I find ways to get a moderate level of exercise several times a week no matter what I'm doing. However, I still knew I'd need at least three months to get into “sheep shape.”

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Had I been less active over the winter, I would have made that five.

Second: keep it simple. Our society has created a multi-billion dollar industry to accomplish a goal our grandparents reached simply by getting through the day. They didn't need personal trainers and expensive club memberships to stay fit. They did so just by leading their lives. Fitness isn't rocket science, and the more complicated you make your program the less likely you'll be to adhere to it.

Third: tailor the program to the goal. I learned a long time ago that while jogging, running, and riding bikes are all great ways to deliver most of the health benefits of exercise, none of these activities will fully prepare a hunter for two weeks in the mountains living out of a backpack. You can reach reasonable "cardio" fitness with just 20 to 30 minutes of moderate exercise four or five times per week. Beyond that, cardio-respiratory fitness increases in very small increments. Those gains may be

important to elite athletes, but they don't matter much to the rest of us. If the goal is to carry a load a long way through steep terrain, the legs will bear most of that burden. To my simple way of thinking, the best way to prepare is—duh!—by carrying loads a long way through steep terrain.

So, I identified two routes—one three miles long, the other five—through the hills around my Southeast Alaska home, beginning at my door. The first began with a half-hour climb straight up that made a fairly good approximation of a sheep stalk, or at least the first part of one. The second route covered rolling terrain with more gradual elevation gains similar to what we'd face on the hike into base camp. Once my legs were comfortable with both routes I started wearing my pack, carrying just fifteen pounds at first but adding five pounds every week until I was up to sixty. (Gradual but steady progression is a key component of any good fitness program.)

And I walked these routes religiously, alternating between the two to give my legs a chance to recover from the steeper climb. With the exception of two brief periods of absence from the area, I only missed one or two days between the end of April and my August departure, rain or shine (and in Southeast Alaska, there's a lot more of the former). Some trainers might criticize this approach on several technical points. I wasn't allowing much recovery time, and this regimen ignored most muscle groups except my legs and back. However, I was developing strength and endurance where I was going to need it, and I felt that the discipline of going through this routine every day outweighed these theoretical concerns.

This regimen may have been repetitive, but that didn't mean it was boring. Because I was out in the woods, there were always tracks to look at and wildlife to watch. Either Maggie, my German wirehair pointer, or Rosy, my yellow Lab, usually accompanied me. Both are young, active hunting dogs, and they enjoyed the exercise as much as I did. My wife Lori accompanied me almost every day, and each of us helped the other stay motivated. Not everyone will be able to step out the door into a



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*Deep in the heart of Brooks Range sheep habitat.*

training environment as pleasant and productive as this one, but with a bit of imagination most of us will be able to devise something similar. The principles are the same wherever you live.

This program demonstrates a simple point of potential interest to many of us. Walking is great exercise, and it's easy to incorporate into your daily routine simply by walking instead of driving. But conditioning legs for the mountains requires more, and the easiest way to get it is by picking up the pace and turning the walk into a jog or a run. However, even low levels of impact can cause problems for those of us with high mileage on our hips, ankles, and especially knees.

I've been lucky. I sustained significant sports injuries to both knees when I was young, I ran regularly for at least two decades, and I sometimes packed a few extra pounds around. My knees should be shot, but somehow they came through all that in great shape. However, many of my close friends and hunting partners have had major knee problems requiring surgery. For them, high impact exercise can cause more

problems than it solves.

The regimen I followed in preparation for my sheep hunt demonstrates two ways around that dilemma. The first—including some steep, sustained

climbing as part of your regular route—is fairly obvious. But I think the second—carrying progressive amounts of weight when you walk—is just as beneficial. Carrying a backpack increases

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***A backpack hunt demands critical planning to be successful...and safe.***

cardio-vascular workload and conditions quads without much increase in impact on weight-bearing joints. It also prepares your back specifically for the task ahead on a backpack hunt. With each increase in weight, I felt amazed by the difference a few added pounds made, especially during steep climbs. But I also felt gratified to see how quickly I adapted.

Unfortunately, other aspects of my training program didn't go as well. Since I'd never had problems with bows in the 70-pound range I didn't do much for my

upper body except shoot. When I noticed some nagging discomfort in my shoulder, I backed off. Then I took a header coming down a steep hill with my pack on and wrenched my arm in the fall. Lifting my right arm overhead became extremely painful. I couldn't shoot a bow and couldn't even cast a fly rod.

The pain was coming from my rotator cuff, due to tendinitis, a partial tear, or both. After giving advice to middle aged bowhunters with similar problems for years, I finally had to deal with it myself. And I had to stop practicing with my bow. As our August departure date approached, I felt confident of my ability to get where I needed to go, but I didn't know if I'd be able to shoot once I got there.

Pre-hunt preparation requires more than exercise. An extended wilderness backpack hunt demands meticulous planning, since we would need to carry everything we needed to survive in a harsh and potentially dangerous environment on our backs. Weight would be critical—I already knew what a difference five extra pounds in my pack made. This realization forced me to make a complete re-evaluation of my equipment.

Although I'd done plenty of backpacking, it had been a while since I'd made a trip this long, and a lot of equipment had improved considerably. My old sheep hunting backpack tent weighed around seven pounds, but I

found newer models that weighed less than half that. I had clung stubbornly to old-style external frame backpacks for years because I liked the ability to take off the bag and lash a whole quarter of elk or caribou to the metal frame. Now I had to admit that newer internal frame models were far more comfortable with a heavy load—and they save several pounds of weight before anything goes inside them. Despite sentimental attachment to my old gear, I invested in a new tent and pack for the trip, saving myself extra pounds for food I knew we'd welcome.

A packing list is important on any weight-sensitive wilderness trip, whether the restrictions apply to the useful load on the flight in or the amount of food and equipment you can carry on your back. We each had one, and we compared and refined them frequently during the trip planning stages. You can't just run through the grocery store grabbing food at random on the day of departure. We planned every backpack meal to the bite. (We actually undershot a bit, but fortunately we camped next to a stream full of tasty arctic char.) We also flew in a small cache of non-perishable goods to leave where we landed in case of a weather delay. Lack of appeal to bears was a key feature of that list, since the North Slope is above timberline latitude and there is no place to cache food where grizzlies can't reach it.

The mental aspects of preparation for a hunt like this may be the most important of all, even if they are difficult to articulate. My personal definition of wilderness is a place that you can't walk out of on your own power, and there isn't much of it left anymore. I've spent more time in wilderness than most people I know, but I still experience a jolt of mental electricity whenever I get there. That can be a wonderful feeling, but if you have doubts—about yourself, your companions, or your equipment—well...

It's easier just to be ready. I hoped that I was.

*Co-editor Don Thomas and his wife Lori divide their time between homes in central Montana and Coastal Alaska.*



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## Creetie and the Cat

Creetie Kerr had planned on hunting deer in her home state of Utah back in the 1950s, but she got more than she had bargained for. Before her evening on stand ended, deer were the last thing on her mind.

She had arrived at her trailside stand earlier in the afternoon in what she describes as her “full hunting regalia.”

“My trousers were of the softest wool, my nylon camouflage parka hung loose and bulky so that my human outline was completely broken up. I wore rubber soled canvas shoes over warm woolen socks, but even the shoes had been discarded during the trailside watch, for an additional pair of extra heavy woolen socks affording me the utmost in quiet foot covering. My face and hands were daubed with food coloring, the color of which blended with the leaves of the surrounding vegetation. My quarry, the deer, would not see color as such, but the tones must appear the same to him.

“Even my bow wore its colorful forest dress, covered with mystic tape and daubed with contrasting tones of tape. No shaft of sunlight would reflect from any metals showing, for these items had been daubed with a dull metal finish called Kodalak. For a time, I had become a bush.”

This human bush knelt in an aspen grove, even timing her shifts in position with the bending of the trees’ branches when occasional gusts of breeze moved them. As the afternoon waned and the air chilled, she “blessed” her little down vest worn under the parka that kept her warm and able to enjoy the wildlife panorama that was unfolding before her.

The first event for the evening was when a doe and two fawns stepped out of the trees and began to nibble on brush as they made their way toward her shooting position.

“They finally ambled within bow range, but the fawns never seemed to

move far enough away from the doe for me to take a shot at her without fear of hitting one of the little guys who, though legal, serve a much better purpose running around in the forest than they would in my locker at home,” she writes. “At the last moment, just when she [the doe] was in a nice all-clear spot, my thread switched on my bow (our wind indicator) and away they went.”

Again, Creetie assumed the role of a bush, but not for long. More deer filtered out of the woods toward the crossing she had staked out, but each time, it seemed, the “very contrary” wind played its role as a spoiler. When the animals approached, she would hear them whistle or stamp the earth before running back into the aspens. Still, she recounts, “It was fun and very interesting. No moment of boredom marked my afternoon.”

Finally that time of the day arrived when the sun has set and the woods are bathed in its afterglow.

“It grew late,” she recounts. “I knew the ‘quiet time’ in the forest was fast approaching. I love the quiet time most of all, for it is then the whole world seemed to rest and wait. Many things went to bed – but many more began their search for food, and it was this search which had enabled me, many times, to watch the night-lifers at their work and play.”

For some time now, Creetie had been watching something moving slowly along a creek bed a considerable distance off that she couldn’t identify.

“I did not have the binocs with me, and in the dimming light at times it seemed to amble or shuffle about. It could be a stray calf, I would tell myself. It could be a bear. It could be my imagination.

“Many times at a distance a bush or rock can become a live thing with a good dash of imagination. I made my eyes stay wide apart without blinking and tried and tried to identify the object. It is every bow hunters’ dream, I guess, to



*Creetie Kerr with a deer.*

have a bear fall to his arrow sometime during his hunting career and being no different than the rest, I, too, have this hope. So it was setting the stage for the drama which was about to follow.”

Whatever it was, it was headed her way and Creetie froze in kneeling position, leaning forward, with her bow at the ready. She lost sight of it for a time, but then heard something moving in the brush.

“The object I had been trying so hard to identify was at my extreme left, and when the new sound made itself heard, I drew in and held my breath hoping to catch it again.”

She then began a lengthy process of moving her head around inch by inch so that she could see what she assumed was a deer. When the sleek form emerged from the undergrowth, however, she states, “I felt at first as though my heart would leap right out and go dancing along the trail.”

“Perhaps,” she then corrects herself, “I should say ‘Go running along the trail’. My mind finally told me I wasn’t looking at a deer but either a very large



bobcat or a small mountain lion.”

The beast had evidently come from the creek below and was now headed up the trail where Creetie had set her ambush. When the distance closed to about 45 yards, it stopped, facing her. Evidently the big cat sensed that something was amiss and paused to take stock of the situation. A glance at the wind thread on her bowstring showed that the fickle breeze was shifting constantly—first blowing in her direction but then wavering a bit and sending an errant puff toward the cat. The movement was so quick, though, that it was impossible to tell where the human-tinged scent was coming from. This cat and mouse game continued for a while as the twilight deepened.

“It was almost dark now, and he was plainly seen to be a large bobcat. I could see the ruff of fur about his face and little pointed ears. I was standing in a crouched position facing him and waited until I had calmed my breathing for a shot. Then my bow was at full draw and I felt everything was perfect for the shot.

“I released. The arrow flew down the lane of white aspen trunks straight at its mark, and then I didn’t believe what I saw. My arrow and the cat were leaning against each other, or so it appeared. I knew it was against his fur

and he didn’t move.”

Those last four words were capitalized in her account, emphasizing her disbelief. Evidently the arrow had lodged in a tree trunk immediately next to the cat so close that they were touching. Why didn’t it take off running? Creetie believed that it was still trying to decide where the hunter was, and wanted to make its departure was in the opposite direction. But which direction was that?

She carefully drew another arrow. The timber tabby stayed rooted to the spot, perhaps wondering if the thing that had caressed its coat was just a stick falling from the tree above. When the second arrow landed, the cat hunched up and Creetie could see that it had struck just behind the first one.

“Now I began to feel funny. Not funny ha-ha. Funny peculiar! Where was this going to end?” she writes. “I had but two broadheads left. I depended upon their efficiency with my life. Fred Bear’s razorhead never looked so good to anyone as it did to me that dusk. Now I started wondering what I would do when I was down to my last arrow, and my hand took time to unfasten my knife in its sheath. I was bigger than that cat I told myself.”

By now the cautious kitty was getting nervous and started to move—directly toward the lurking hunter and down close to the ground as a cat does when it stalks. But just as things were really heating up, the breeze got into the act again, wafting a final wisp directly toward the approaching cat. Realizing that danger lay ahead, it now turned tail and headed in the opposite direction just as another arrow buried itself in the ground next to it. Having had enough “falling branches”, the shadows quickly swallowed it up as it made good its escape.

“By now,” the author writes, “my eyes could scarcely see the trees about me, and I headed up the steep incline toward our little camp. The tingles went with me, and soon it was black all about. Night sounds told me the owls were out. Deer were on the move, for I could hear their occasional brush brushing.”

Creetie made it back to camp in the dark and told the others about her

standoff with the cat. She had almost bagged “old stub-tail” but had missed by inches not once, but three times—a real tribute to her ability to avoid being seen by its sharp eyes. A few weeks later, however, she discovered, there was another approach that worked even better on bobcats when her husband, Dick, bagged one.

“Dick and I were sneaking along an old trail in the mountains when I saw a flash of something ahead,” she writes. “Dick was directly in front of me, though some distance ahead and at the time was glancing in a completely different direction. I got his attention and pointed, saying ‘BOBCAT.’”

Her husband, who was much closer to where the bobcat had crossed, disappeared into the brush and then there was complete silence as Creetie strained to hear the tell-tale sound of a singing bowstring. The next minute there was something big running through the brush and a dog barking.

The “dog” turned out to be Dick. The cat had been in thick cover that would not allow for a clean shot with an arrow, so he took a gamble and ran at the animal baying like a hound. Sure enough, the frightened feline scampered up the nearest tree, moved out to a limb, and lay there dangling its paws as it looked around for the pack of canines. A well-placed arrow quickly brought it back to earth.

Reflecting on her previous hunt, his wife concludes:

“...all the hours of waiting...were well worth those few minutes. I do know that particular spot on that particular hillside, along that particular trail will always have a special place in my hunting memories. I’m sure such is the case with you, too, for it isn’t always the ones you bring back which actually give you the most. I used every bit of know-how to get him (the bobcat) and tomorrow, given the opportunity, I’d do the same. But in a way, I like to know he still may be out there roaming the forests.”

*Regular contributor Duncan Pledger is a journalist from Milton, Wisconsin.*



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*Left—Norm Johnson of Blacktail Bows, with the author's old Blacktail bow that spent six years in the river, and the new replacement.*

*Above—A Zwickey Eskimo broadhead after being submerged for six years.*

# The Resurrection

*By Tom Vanasche*

**P**atience is not what I'm known for, but impatience nearly cost me my life one fall day. I have been called driven, and perhaps a bit obsessive-compulsive. That trait has allowed me to accomplish much in the world of medicine, farming, and in the pursuit of game, but it does have its drawbacks.

I raced to get the canoe into the water. I was running late and trying to get to my stand for an evening hunt before nightfall. I had my bow and a small pack as I shoved off into the South Santiam River. I had done this several times before, as the river borders my farm for 2,000 feet. As I neared the far bank, a previously unknown obstacle appeared in front of the canoe's bow. The mangled tip of the tree root grabbed the canoe and swung it 90 degrees to the current, rocking me as well. That was all it took, as water poured over the side and made me the captain of a sunken vessel.

In that moment, I realized I had been in such a rush

that I had forgotten my life jacket. I had religiously worn it on all prior journeys, but there was no time to think of that now. I was close to the far shore, and after my dunking under the cold river water I kicked off the bottom and wrestled the canoe up the steep bank. The bow, paddle, and pack were long gone, as I had failed to tie them down.

Then I took inventory. I had my waterlogged, useless cell phone in a pocket. No help there. I could attempt to walk a long distance through brush and briars to the next farm or get back across the river. I stupidly chose the latter, even knowing a teenager had drowned a few hundred yards farther down the stream two months prior.

I headed upstream, found a stout beaver gnawed staff, and edged into the current, about to receive an education quite quickly. I thought by going upstream, where it was wider but shallower, I would be able to inch across with the staff. Should it fail me, I could kick, flail, and drift downstream to the opposite gravel bar.



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*Jim Akenson puts a stalk on a hog.*


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I calculated poorly. After a few feet in, the river took me. I had no control as it swept me downstream, tumbling me over and over as I struggled. I had left my coat and rubber boots on because of the cold, and now they hampered every effort I made. Thoughts of the drowning victim crossed my mind as I gave it everything I had left. A hundred yards from my starting point I felt gravel under my feet for the first time. Now I was in two feet of water but still could not stand, as I was spent. I crawled the last ten feet to dry ground.

The custom bow was gone but I did not care, as I was lucky to be alive after my foolish, impatient choices. The bow could be replaced.

This was a Norm Johnson Blacktail recurve that had been on many adventures around the world. When I called him, he informed me that the fiberglass material in the bow makes them sink, and hopefully it would be nearby in the bottom. I had a diver perform a fruitless search and then had Norm make an identical replacement to start a new series of quests.

That bow drowned in 2004. In October of 2010 I was working a shift in my usual job as an Emergency Department physician. As I introduced myself to the next patient, he inquired if I was "Tom Vanasche, a left-handed bowhunter." When I said yes, he told me that he had found a bow along that river about four miles downstream the previous April with that name on the lower limb. Astounded, I began to ask many questions. Apparently it was intact but beaten up. It had survived almost six years in the river, bouncing along the bottom and presumably thrusting upward during surges of flooding. He had found it at a high water mark in the brush that he frequents to fish.

I traded my services for that bow and when he delivered it, both Norm and I were shocked. It appeared that the riser was definitely good, and that perhaps the limbs could even be reworked. The Great Northern quiver was still attached, though quite rusty, and the foam insert was gone. Amazingly, one half of an aluminum arrow still remained snapped into place, and the remains of a Zwickey broadhead were decomposing on the end.

With two years of drying and a little prodding, Norm was able to bring it back to life. It had been a 65# bow. Now,



with the limbs shaved back, it was 57#. He also suggested I wear a football helmet when I shot it. I'll admit that I did not come to full draw while shooting for quite some time, but when I did, the bow held up.

Now for the true test. To come full circle and be "resurrected," I needed to go on a hunt with it as my sole weapon.

As I had won the Georgia hog hunt raffle at the Portland PBS convention, I thought that would be an appropriate venue. I contacted Matt Schuster, the host, and made the arrangements. Jim Akenson would accompany me, as neither of us had ever taken a hog. After exchanging many calls, the day finally arrived. I texted Matt from the San Antonio airport that we would be arriving in Atlanta that afternoon, and all was on schedule. Matt texted back that indeed all was well and he would be there to pick us up next week. He had mistakenly marked our arrival date one week off on his calendar months ago and even though we talked several times in the interim, we never mentioned the actual date again.

Matt was three hours away on business, had none of his gear, and of course no groceries. He had to dissolve his work schedule abruptly, and Biggie Hoffman, who was to be our chef, guide, and comedian, could not make it now due to the timing. It was a late night, but we had a great time BS-ing and eventually arrived in the wee hours to "Paradise." This, at one time, was a traditional-only hunting club in the wilds of southern Georgia. It is still plenty wild, and we would have it to ourselves for three days.

I had never been in a southern swamp before and found it fascinating. Perhaps with more experience I might have noticed the curled copperhead snake that Matt's boot was pressing against that first day. Only after Matt jumped into my lap did I become aware of this well-camouflaged killer.

We saw turkeys, alligators, and many different species of birds. The pigs were initially scarce, but then I had my chance with a group of perhaps ten animals including two mature hogs. Over thirty minutes I managed to creep within 27 yards without being winded. I think juveniles spotted me a couple of times, but when I froze, they settled down.

The largest one turned broadside and the



***Matt and Tom with Tom's first hog, taken with the resurrected Blacktail bow...the submersible model!***

"Resurrection" spoke. The arrow looked true, but it was close to dusk so we retreated. We then picked up Jim and Matt's bird dog, as it also blood trails. Upon our return we easily found the arrow broken in half, although the broadhead had passed through. As I was diligently on the ground finding a few drops of blood and wondering if we would locate the hog, the dog casually took 30 seconds and stood over the hog 50 yards away. That was impressive.

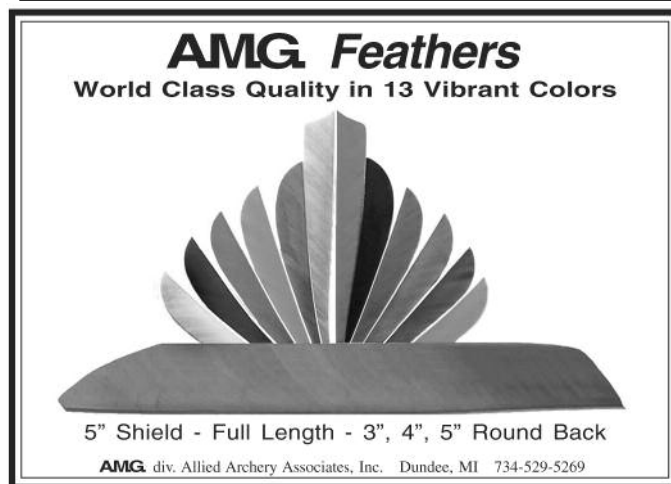
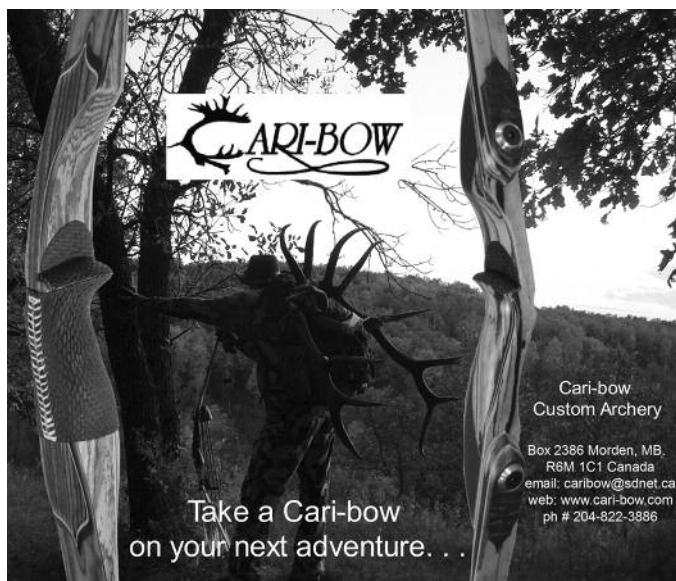
As I write this, my life jacket is not far away and the "Resurrection" is always ready to go!

*Frequent contributor Tom Vanasche is an emergency room physician from Albany, Oregon.*



### Equipment Notes

On his hog hunt, Tom carried a 57# Blacktail recurve (special Norm Johnson submersible model), Sandman Arrow System carbon shafts with DIB inserts and sleeves, and 300-grain Green Meanie broadheads.





## Backcountry Knots

Being able to tie a handful of good knots is just one of those skills that everyone should have. Like building a fire or finding a good campsite, tying good knots is fundamental woodsmanship. But like many other skills that were once taken for granted, knot tying seems to be a dying art, even among outdoorsmen. Nevertheless, a good knot is as useful as it's ever been,

and mastering a handful will make your next outing more enjoyable, and may even save your life someday. Let's take a look at two of the most important—the bowline and the clove hitch.

### Bowline

The bowline is one of my favorite knots for two main reasons. It's solid as a rock, meaning it won't slip, and no matter how much pressure you apply to it, you can always get it loose easily. Start by making an overhand loop, then bring your tag end (the "working" end of the line, as opposed to the "standing"



*Bowline—Photo 4*



*Bowline—Photo 1*



*Bowline—Photo 2*



*Bowline—Photo 3*

end) back through it as shown in Photo 1. Be sure to pass the tag end through the loop in the right direction (from top to bottom when tied as shown) or the knot will fall apart.

Next bring your tag end under the main line then back through the loop

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*Clove Hitch—Photo 1*

parallel to your first pass as shown in photos 2 and 3. That's it. Now just pull the slack from the knot by pulling on the tag end and main line at the same time. No need to really crank down on it. It's self-tightening. Photo 4 shows the finished knot.

**Uses:** The bowline can be used in a variety of situations where you need a fixed loop on the end of a line that won't slip, such as a loop for your hand if you are towing a raft or dragging a deer, or a loop to throw over a trailer hitch if you are pulling a vehicle out of a ditch. By running the tag end through or around another object before tying the knot, you can use a bowline to attach an anchor to a line or a raft to a tree. Two bowlines can be used to tie two lines together even if they are of unequal diameter.

### Clove Hitch

Next up is the clove hitch. A hitch is a knot that attaches a line to another object. The clove hitch comes in handy when you need a hitch that can be tied quickly and adjusted easily. It's basically just two half hitches in series. You can either tie this knot beforehand and then throw both loops over whatever you're hitching to (if it has a free end), or tie it directly around the pole. I'll show how to tie it beforehand and trust you can decipher the other way from the photos.

Start with an overhand loop like we did for the bowline. Then just make another and lay it directly on top of the first. Photo 2 shows the simple knot. Now just throw that over the free end



*Clove Hitch—Photo 2*

(top) of your tent pole, give it a tug from both ends, and you're good to go. If no free end is available (when you're tying to a tree, for example), just throw a half hitch around the object and follow it with a second one on top of the first. Photo 2 shows the finished knot.

**Uses:** The clove hitch is the best knot to use when tying off a tent to a tent stake. It's also useful for securing a boat to a piling or a raft to a tree on shore. A series of clove hitches can be used to lash an elk quarter securely to a pack frame.



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## The Brain Tanned Plains Style Quiver

### Part 1: Tanning the Hide



**F**ew things in life bring more satisfaction than hunting with equipment you made yourself. Using the skin from an animal you harvested with your bow can only serve to increase that keen level of satisfaction. Brain tanning the hide entails a fair amount of work, but offers a product far superior to commercially tanned leather. Functional as well as beautiful, the brain tanned Lakota or plains style quiver represents the ultimate hunting quiver.

Our first step is taking a deer of some species, and being careful with the hide while getting it out of the woods. Packing or a game cart for small deer, rather than a drag, is definitely in order. Large hides, like elk or moose, can be a challenge and may be high-graded by saving just the center body and neck section. During the skinning process, avoid over-use of the knife and fist off the hide where possible. When using the knife, avoid cutting the hide. Once the hide is free, all fat, meat and membrane must be scraped off and removed from the inside. A fleshing beam works well, but the task can be accomplished with patience on any smooth surface. The backside of a drawknife, a dull blade, or the bowl of a large spoon can be used as a scraping tool. At any time during the entire brain tan process, the hide may be placed in a plastic trash bag and frozen until you are ready to continue. I favor pig brain, as it seems to have a higher fat content, but according to Native American wisdom, each animal has enough brain to tan its own hide.

You will need a frame initially to hold the hide while scraping off the hair and membrane, then again for working the tanned hide while it dries. Construct a frame by lashing saplings together, or build one from wood such as 4x4s or landscape timbers. Make the frame sturdy, and large enough



*Left—Scraping away the hair with a wahinkie.*

*Above—Krista scraping the hide with an ulu.*

to stretch out the hide with eight inches or more of room for lashing on all sides.

Once the hide is fleshed to the best of your ability, punch a hole every few inches around about one inch from the edge of the hide for lashing it to the frame. It is better to punch holes with an awl, rather than cut them, as they are less likely to tear out when you begin working the hide.

Lace the hide tautly into the frame using several dozen pieces of strong, lightweight line, each about a yard long. First snug up the four corners with the hide roughly centered, then tie the remaining areas. This task is easier if the original hide was large enough to allow removal of legs and thinner belly skin areas. Weave in and out through two to three holes at a time, and then tie to the frame. This makes it easy to take up slack and adjust tension if holes tear out.

Stretch the hide fairly tight but not drum-tight, as it will shrink while it dries. Any sharp blade held at a 90-degree angle can be used as a scraper. We made one from an





***Almost finished working the hide with a paddle.  
Note the stretch from all directions.***

old file lashed to a handle. I believe this native style scraper is called a wahinkie, the Lakota word for scraper. An Alaskan style ulu also works well. Once the meat side has been fleshed, scrape it while wet until all of the membrane and any remaining tissue is completely removed and the hide is clean and uniform.

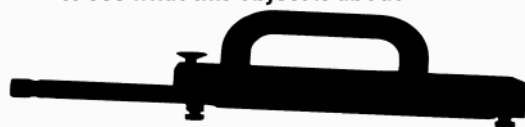
Allow the hide to dry in the frame out of the sun. Then, with a very sharp scraper, work the skin side until you not only scrape away the hair, but also the epidermis membrane that holds the hair follicles. Keeping a sharpening tool handy and using it often is very important. Work cautiously, being careful not to tear the hide while it is in this relatively fragile state, particularly in thin areas. On larger hides such as elk, big bucks, or moose, the thick hide along the back and neck area will need to be shaved down with the sharp scraper. Thick leather is good for the areas where the broadhead arrows will rest in the quiver, but it must be thin enough for the brain to penetrate. After scraping, gently sand both sides of the tight, dried hide with 220-sandpaper while it is stretched in the frame. This prepares it for the brains. Be careful with the edge of the paper not to cut or score the hide.

Mash and mix the brain in a gallon of warm water. I generally use a hand beater to mix it thoroughly. The warm water will help the brain to penetrate the hide. Do not use hot water, which could cook and weaken the skin. Fold the hide into the liquid, soak it a bit, and then wring it out vigorously, repeating the process several times. Next, sew up any existing holes in the hide, then repeat the soaking and wringing process, attempting to saturate every single fiber in the skin. A properly saturated hide should be reminiscent of a soapy washcloth with bubbles squishing through the fabric when you squeeze it. Wring out all liquid. If the hide has not been thoroughly scraped and brained, it will not work properly and will have stiff spots. I usually consider this a good day's work, and throw it in the freezer at this point. It can be frozen either wrung dry or in the liquid brain solution. Thawing time varies accordingly. Once again, always keep it out of the sun to prevent grease burn.

Next, lace the thoroughly wrung out hide to the frame again. Immediately begin stretching the hide as it dries, by pushing against it. I like to use a short wooden paddle for this process. Push gently at first until the hide begins to stretch and flex. Too much pressure may tear out the ties; simply tie more if it tears out. Be sure to move from spot to spot working the entire hide. Your goal is initially to saturate each fiber with oil from the brain, then to keep each fiber in motion and stretched as it dries.

Drying time varies considerably with hide thickness and humidity. A windy, cool day out of the sun is best. Flies

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can be a problem in summer. As it begins to dry, the hide becomes stronger and more supple. When nearing completion, the entire hide gives and stretches as pressure is applied. Continue working the hide until it is thoroughly dry. Some people elect to gently sand the hide again to soften it and even the finish, using either fine sandpaper or a pumice stone. Others stretch and pull it across a taught rope to break it further. I find that trying to skip the framing step and use just the rope to work the hide from wet to dry can be too hard on my knuckles. I do sometimes use the rope at the end to soften the hide.

When removed from the frame, it should be pale, supple, and feel similar to soft, lofty, suede. You can blow air or



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# TradArchers'™ WORLD

## Magazine

“Where the adventure never ends.”



***Finished and ready to cut from the frame and start making the quiver in the next installment.***

smoke through a properly tanned skin. The next step is smoking the brain tanned hide. This will darken and waterproof the hide to some extent, allowing it to dry back pliable if it becomes wet. Smoking is best accomplished with a cool smoky fire—semi-rotted wood works best. Some people hang the hide for extended periods high in a tipi. I usually lace the hide into a bag shape and put it over the smoke stack of an old wood-burning stove. Be cautious—smoke the hide, don't burn it! As with the brains, you are attempting to coat each fiber of the skin with smoke residue. The smoke should be able to penetrate the hide, but I find it best to turn it and smoke both sides to the desired color.

There are many fine publications available providing more in-depth information on brain tanning. With the advent of BSE (mad cow) and other brain diseases, some practitioners elect to use Ivory bar soap, or eggs rather than brains. I understand a similar result may be obtained with these products.

Upon completing the brain tanning process, you have one of nature's most miraculous fibers surpassed by no modern material for durability and quietness. The ability to work hides is one of man's most ancient skills. In the next issue we will construct what I consider the very best archer's hunting quiver from your hide.

*One of our Campfire Philosophers, regular contributor Krista Holbrook now lives in Fairbanks, Alaska with her husband Sterling.*



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I have tried all kinds of quivers over the past 40 years—quivers mounted to my bow, back versions, side quivers, CatQuivers—and have found positives and negatives to all of them. Eventually I decided that I did not like quivers mounted on my bow due to the bulk and vibration they could add. I also wanted something that would easily move around to allow passage through vegetation. My brother built me a prototype tube shaped quiver, which I really liked. It rode close to the back and side. Worn across the back it could rotate and slide down to parallel the ground when crawling under blow-downs and brush, and it covered the feathers. The one drawback was that he had built it out of a heavy cardboard mailing tube and over time weather took its toll. I decided to build my own version and came up with one that has served me very well for years. Waterproof, tough, and cheap to build, it has become my favorite.

This quiver can be built in as little as one sitting or two evenings in front of the fireplace. It is composed of local hardware store materials and items scrounged from around my basement. The total cost is about \$15. Parts include one section of plastic downspout (about \$10, and big enough for three quivers), a plastic downspout elbow (\$2.50), some camouflage covering material (free from my basement junk pile), a shoulder strap (scrounged from an old canteen) and some black zip ties (\$3.00).

**Materials:**

One 9-ft. section of plastic downspout

One downspout elbow

Light plastic lid (Milk jug or other light plastic can substitute)

Zip ties, large and small

550 or similar cordage

**Tools:**

Drywall handsaw or similar pointed sawing device

Knife

Hacksaw

Sharpie pen

Dark spray paint

**Step 1:** Cut the downspout to a 3-ft.

# The Downspout Quiver



*Photo 1—The materials you will need.*

section with hacksaw.

**Step 2:** Use the sharpie to draw the outline of the arrow removal window on a wide side of the downspout. Start about 1.5" from the bottom edge of the downspout so that the open window in the downspout will be the flat surface of one of the wide sides from 1.5" off the bottom to about 12" off the bottom. Make the rectangle box just inside the edge of the sidewalls, so that you are on the flat top of the downspout. This should give you an open window about 10" long by 2 1/4 " wide. Cut the rectangle out with the drywall saw. You can start the cut by putting the sharp point against the spout side and giving it a quick pound with an open hand.

**Step 3:** Prepare the downspout elbow. Cut it even with the flat side of the downspout or even slightly angled outward. I put it lightly into a vise and then cut it with a hacksaw. If cut correctly it will prevent the arrow from being able to slip out the bottom of the spout, since the arrow cannot turn that corner. If you cut it less than flush with the downspout sidewall (angled inward) the arrows will be able to slip out the bottom and you will be out \$2.50 for a



*Photo 2—Cutting the elbow.*

new elbow. (See Photo 2)

**Step 4:** Epoxy the elbow into the downspout with the open end of the elbow facing the same direction as the open window. This should end up with the open end of the downspout, then a strip of about 2" of material that includes the elbow collar followed by the 10" open rectangle window. In this way the pointed ends of your arrow points will be visible in the curved section of the spout but will be restrained behind the 2" wide collar.

**Step 5:** Cover the entire downspout





**Photo 3**

exterior with a soft camouflage material of your choice. Cut this so that the seam is on the opposite side from your cut out window, so it will be next to your body when carrying the quiver. Next cut out the material covering the rectangular arrow window. Leave about ½" of material along each side so you can fold it over the cut edges and glue it into place inside the body of the pipe. Also, include some material glued inside the bottom edge of the elbow. This will be what your points actually stick into at the bottom of the quiver so that they don't slide around on the bare plastic. Hit the inside of the window with dark



**Photo 4**

spray paint to cover any visible white. (See Photo 3.)

**Step 6:** Envision the quiver against your side with the arrow window facing away from your body and the elbow to your front also facing same, so that you can pull the arrow outward by backing it up two inches and sliding it forward out the window as the quiver hangs from your shoulder. The side you want it to hang on will depend on whether you are right or left-handed. With the window away from your body, the top edge of the spout (narrow side) is where you will fasten your quiver straps. The lower fastening point should be just above the downspout elbow and collar portion, which is too thick to cut easily. I make two parallel slits by putting the drywall saw point on the side and pounding it through twice about an inch apart. Push a piece of 550-cord

through these slits to make an attachment point for the lower end of the strap. On the same side, move to the top of the quiver (opposite end from the elbow), measure down about 3" from the top edge, and put in two more slits with the drywall saw. You can either use 550-cord or take a large zip tie around the outside body of the pipe and lace it through the cut side to form an anchor point for the quiver strap. I used a 2-quart canteen strap for the quiver strap, which came with handy clips already in place. (See Photo 5.)

**Step 7:** A final feature is a hinged light plastic cover on the top of the quiver. I added this after my last hunt in New Mexico in September, 2013, where I spent five days chasing a nice velvet mulie and was drenched for four of those days. I thought that just being in the pipe would protect the fletching from the weather, but the feathers quickly became soaked and flattened by the intense rains. As a retrofit to my original quiver, I am adding a flip cover to the top. (See Photo 4.)

Cut a light but stiff piece of plastic (from a milk jug or Tupperware top) to fit the top open end of the cut off pipe. Using the drywall saw, punch two small holes near the top edge of one of the wider sides of the drainpipe. Do the same on the piece of plastic, and thread a small zip tie through each hole in the pipe and each hole in the lid. This will form a hinged lid to cover the fletching

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Photo 5

from the weather. Don't over-tighten the zip ties, and leave a little room for the lid to be lifted and closed with the loose zip tie acting as a hinge. Clip off the excess zip tie ends. Then cut a piece of soft material and glue it to the top of the plastic lid. (See Photo 4 again.)

**Step 8:** The addition of accessories allows your imagination to go free. I take a Piggy Backer arrow carrier, which is made for clipping a spare arrow to bow mounted quiver arrows, and cut this in half. Take one half and fasten it on the collar just below the arrow window and fasten the other half about 12" down from the top of the quiver on the same side. This will allow you to carry an external arrow mounted above the arrow window. Mounting it slightly to either side makes it easier to remove other arrows. For safety's sake this is always reserved for a field point or Judo-tipped arrow, never a broadhead. I had some difficulty finding a way to anchor those Piggy Backer halves, but finally settled on drilling two holes on the back side of the quiver (seam side of the camo) opposite of the Piggy Backer and large enough to fit a screwdriver. I had pre-drilled two small holes behind where I wanted to mount the Piggy Backer and then held one half in place while I screwed it down from the backside through the larger holes. I

put two small screws in each Piggy Backer. A little epoxy helps keep it secure. (Photo 5.)

I have found good seating spots for a brush clipper, a low profile skinning knife, a lightweight hand saw with retractable blade, a survival tool with fire-starter, compass, mini flashlight, a light broadhead file, and an external carrier for one arrow. My favorite add-on is the brush clipper, which slides perfectly into a simple plastic loop made from a zip tie. It rides securely and slides in and out easily, right at hand level where it is readily available within reach. This is very convenient when moving through heavy brush or briars. I have also included some 550-cord tie downs about 20" apart for carrying a lightweight three-legged stool. Your own add-ons are only limited by your imagination and how much weight you are willing to add. Proper placement of the accessories is the key to keeping the quiver's slim profile and balance right. (See Photo 5.)

One special feature of this quiver that puts it a step above commercial versions is what I call its "self cleaning" design. With other tube quivers, I always ended up with a collection of twigs, leaf litter, seeds, and debris in the bottom. With this design I left the bottom open by cutting the elbow to a straight cut so that kind of junk flows on through, but the arrows cannot fall out. It also makes it a little easier to see what kind of head is on the arrow you are pulling. Some might see this as a safety concern since the blades are partially visible within the end of the curved downspout, but I feel they are safely contained. I have been using this for four years and in that time have never even had a single nick. The ability to see the arrowhead I want has served me well. Two years ago, on an elk hunt in Colorado, I made a good shot on a cow elk. Surprisingly, she jumped about ten feet but then stood still looking around. In a quick move I was able to grab a new arrow from the quiver, which I had placed in front of me on the edge of my ground blind. Seeing the heads allowed me to realize that I was about to remove a Judo point and switch to a broadhead without delay. I was able to make an additional hit on

that elk, helping to bring her down quicker.

It is best to keep six or more arrows in the quiver to prevent them from banging around. This quiver easily holds up to a dozen shafts depending on how tightly you want to pack the feathers. The drainpipe quiver is my solution to an old problem: lightweight, tough, cheap and easy to customize. Make one, and see how it works for you.

*Chris Ragan works as a Security Manager for a defense contractor and is a retired Army National Guard officer. He lives with his wife and two children on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Maryland.*



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### New SG-20 Adhesive

Loving the outdoors means seeing beautiful vistas, experiencing invigorating achievements and traveling to breathtaking locations; but the joys of



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*Left—The author practicing shooting through some downfall at a javelina-sized target.*

*Above—Practicing a tough shot—note the log just to the right of the vitals with a tree and shrubs to the left.*

## Practicing the Tough Shots

**F**orget it, it's not possible," my hunting partner Geoff muttered as we watched a desert cottontail streak across the ocotillo dotted landscape of southern Arizona. Geoff and I were hunting javelina south of Tucson and finding the critters a bit scarce. Still, I thought the little cottontail would serve nicely as alternate quarry because it was abundant and apparently quite challenging. Geoff had been hunting the area for many years and told me, based on his experience, that I would be wasting my time with the rabbits because they never stopped running while in bow range unless they piled into a thick shrub that no arrow could possibly penetrate. He suggested that even attempting such a shot would be unethical, since the likelihood of just wounding the animal was high, if it was hit at all. Rather than be discouraged, I looked at shooting a cottontail as a challenge and figured I had a better chance of bagging an abundant game animal than I did of arrowing the elusive javelina.

Geoff and I went our separate ways, and I continued to see rabbits. Finally, I watched one zip into the middle of

some thick shrubs nearby. Slowly and carefully I looked the area over and found a small opening through the brush. The rabbit probably felt secure in there, but a well-placed shot resulted in one bagged bunny. Sure it was a difficult shot, but not overly so because I frequently practice shooting over and through various kinds of vegetation. That is, I practice the tough shots.

When bowhunting, our quarries do not usually appear on open fields without distractions. Bowhunters normally have to deal with leaves, twigs, branches, and brush, often resulting in challenging opportunities for shots that may or may not be ethical to attempt. Terrain also complicates matters, and hunters may find themselves contending with steep uphill or downhill shots. Vegetation and terrain can confound matters for a hunter and turn a relatively close shot into something very difficult and perhaps even unethical, depending on the hunter's skill.

A couple of years ago I was easing along an old dirt road when I saw a bedded mule deer on the far side of a quaking aspen thicket. Although I could clearly see the deer, it was just as clear that I did not have a shot through that tangle of young quakies. I took a step or two backward and found a small opening that afforded a fine shot. The deer ended up in the freezer.

Later, my hunting partner wanted to see where I'd arrowed the deer. When we arrived at the spot he started to question my sanity and ethics; as far as he was concerned there was no ethical shot to be had. When I showed him where I actually stood to make the shot, he quickly changed



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*Near perfect form can help build confidence when shooting under challenging conditions.*

his tune and congratulated me on taking the deer. He changed his mind because he could see the opening that I had and because we frequently practice that kind of shot. He knew it was well within both of our abilities.

What makes a shot ethical? The ethics of a given shot on an animal vary greatly among hunters as a result of skill level and experience. Some folks should only take very open shots at distances of 15 yards or less. Other traditional bowhunters may be skilled at longer distances and comfortable and skillful at threading an arrow through a small opening in the brush. Each person has to decide if a given opportunity is ethical, and whether or not their experience and skill will result in a clean kill. I often talk to new bowhunters about developing a zone of confidence, or a set of conditions under which they feel certain of making a given shot. Practicing under conditions that approximate those found in real hunting situations will help archers develop a zone of confidence defined not only by distance, but also by terrain and vegetation.



*Standing on a log and dealing with brush provides a very challenging shot.*





***This desert cottontail fell to a well-placed tough shot.***

Although shooting at targets in open areas certainly improves a bowhunter's technical skill, it won't do much to build that zone of confidence or improve a hunter's proficiency with the more challenging shots that might be encountered. Additionally, with the exception of distance, this kind of practice scenario will not allow a bowhunter to better understand his or her limitations.

There are two general methods for practicing tough shots. The first, stump shooting or roving through forests and fields, allows an individual to set up a variety of challenging shots at varying distances. It gives bowhunters an appreciation for effects of terrain and the difficulties involved in uphill or downhill shooting. Still, to fully benefit from this sort of practice, individuals should not just look for easy targets at short range. Instead, hunters should vary their range, shooting angle, and terrain. Stump shooters should look for opportunities to fling an arrow at targets through openings in brush or trees. Stump shooting does not require a formal archery range and can be enjoyed under many situations. I always take a bow on camping trips and can normally find time for some stump shooting, often with other members of the camping party. Sometimes fishing trips and other outings also provide opportunities for stump shooting. Make sure you exercise care and caution when stump shooting. A few years ago my wife and I were fishing when I took a break from the fly rod to shoot a few arrows. A well-placed shaft smacked an old aspen stump, but it just missed a buck mule deer bedded in tall grass next to the target. I had no idea that deer was there.

3-D shoots offer the second great opportunity to practice challenging shots. However, check with club rules first to make sure it is permissible to shoot from somewhere other than an established point or stake. Always keep safety in mind at these shoots. Make sure your arrows have a safe backstop and are not heading in a direction that might endanger other shooters.

Many clubs set up targets that test an archer because of terrain or vegetation. The beauty of 3-D shoots is that they allow bowhunters opportunities to challenge themselves on a target that is a reasonable simulation of game the hunter may pursue. It always surprises me to see most shooters simply taking the easiest shot afforded. At a recent 3-D shoot, four of us were backed up with another group of four shooters at one target waiting for some archers to finish at the next target. While standing there, one of our group members noticed a unique opportunity for a shot at the target we were at. He saw that we could sit at the edge of a draw and shoot under some overhanging branches for a more difficult but very doable shot.

All of us jumped at the chance, and we invited the group of archers standing next to us to try it as well. One individual flatly refused, while the other three looked doubtful. We encouraged them a bit (including some good-natured heckling) and three eventually tried the shot. All made it and seemed amazed that they could do so. Without some encouragement from us, none of the archers in that group would have attempted a shot that might arise during an actual hunt. They also would have lost an opportunity to further test their skills and gain more confidence.

All bowhunters should strive to understand their limitations, but they must also realize that these limitations can change based on experience and skill level. The limitations of a new bowhunter are, or at least should be, vastly different than those of someone with 20 years of experience. There is no harm in trying a difficult shot on a target. By practicing tough shots we learn our limitations and discover what we can or cannot do in a hunting situation. It is far better to make a mistake on a stump or 3-D target than an actual animal.

Bowhunters should not be afraid to challenge themselves. By pushing the envelope, hunters can become much more proficient at making tough shots. It's still important to work at form and follow-through, and open shots at close range are great for that. Nevertheless, to progress as a bowhunter, archers should always strive to improve their skills under hunting conditions.

*Jack Connelly lives in Blackfoot, Idaho with his wife Cheryl. He currently serves as an Idaho Bowhunter Education Instructor and President of Blackfoot River Bowmen.*



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# Traditional Harvests



Eldon Jones of Torrington, WY, with a whitetail doe he killed with a 52# Bear's Paw recurve, cedar shaft, and a Bear Razorhead.



Portage, IN, bowhunter Jim Calamaris shot this black bear using a 48# Great Northern Gamegetter bow, tapered cedar arrow, and 125-grain Black Zwickey Eskimo broadhead.



Dan Collins, 17, from Clearfield, PA, with a fine 8-point buck he killed with a 55# Cameron bow, Gold Tip shaft, and Zwickey broadhead. This buck was his second deer with a bow; he shot his first deer, a doe, four weeks prior.



Gary Groll of Cambridge Springs, PA, took this 7-point buck using a 50# Bear Super Kodiak, homemade cedar arrow, and a Bear Razorhead.



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Fourteen-year-old Aiden Cocozzo of Schuylerville, NY, took this carp with a Martin recurve.



Hunting in his home country of Spain, Javier Garcia-Linan took this Russian boar with 60# Black Widow bow.



Mark Fenstad of Little Marais, MN, with a couple of grouse he bagged with a recurve and 3-blade broadhead.



Eaton Rapid, MI, bowhunter Ron Gibbs with a feral hog he shot with a 53# Northern Mist Baraga longbow, Easton 2016 XX78 shaft, and a 150-grain Steel Force Hellfire head.

The Traditional Harvests page is sponsored by Rod Bremer of Columbia River Knife and Tool (CRKT) in Portland, Oregon. Each issue one bowhunter, whose photo is bordered in red, is selected at random to receive a knife courtesy of Rod and CRKT.

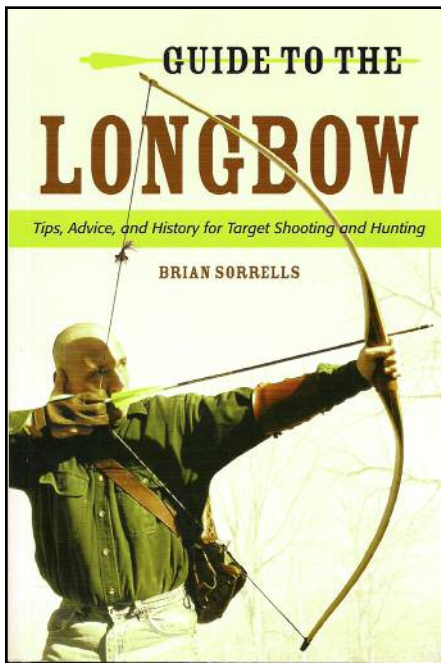
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## *Guide to the Longbow*

Author: Brian Sorrells

\$16.95 Paperback/\$8.99 Kindle Edition

Following a thorough read of *Guide to the Longbow* one will be hard pressed to think of one archery related topic that author Brian Sorrells did not consider while putting his third book together. The chapters per topic are paced perfectly, as Sorrells' prose will both educate the beginning bowshooter and entertain even the longtime bowman. Entire volumes have been penned focusing on one single topic whether it is bows, arrows, archery history, shooting technique, or hunting strategy. But here Sorrells' is clever to invest just the correct number of pages on each in order to cover the material in a concise yet adequate overview before moving on to the next chapter.

Aside from Sorrells' reader friendly prose *A Guide to the Longbow* has a fresh, clean appearance in its layout that is quite appealing. The first page of each chapter is shaded in light green, there are photos aplenty that accompany the particular subject material, and there are a generous number of sidebars per chapter (also highlighted in the aforementioned green) that serve to enhance each chapter, even at the

author's expense. In "Hunting with the Longbow" the author unabashedly confesses his turkey curse:

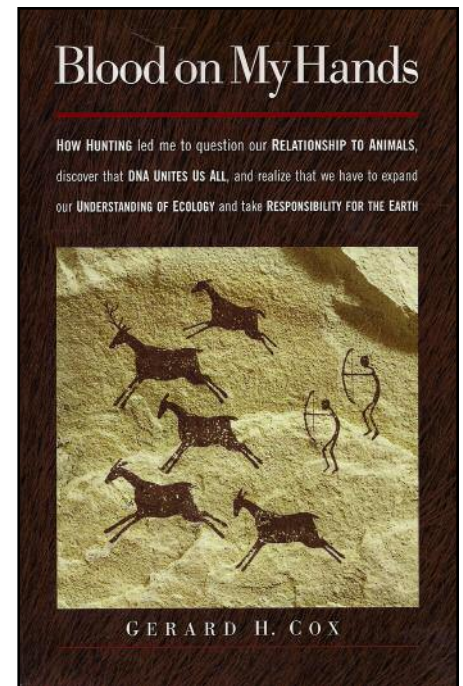
*I don't know why turkeys rattle me so much when other longbow hunters take them routinely. I've missed turkeys at distances measured in feet and have even emptied a quiver at the same turkey.*

Much wise advice, especially for those new to the longbow, is to be found in "Finding a Longbow That's Right for You." Longbow designs in particular have changed drastically in recent decades and although straight-limbed, broomstick handled longbows retain their ardent supporters (think G. Fred Asbell's advice to reduce guaranteed handshock of such bows by "squeezing the sap out of it"). there are now more shooter-friendly designs with deflexed limbs and custom-shaped grips. New archers are encouraged to research their first purchase adequately.

We traditionalists are largely a frugal sort, and Sorrells is admittedly is no exception. For archers on a budget, the author includes money saving tips that coach the reader through the crafting of homemade arrows and back quivers. Yet archers can be a fickle lot, too. (Note the thousands of used bows for sale on the Internet.) Here Sorrells strongly cautions that you get what you pay for. Early in his bowshooting career a \$75.00 bargain bow eventually became kindling for his backyard fire ring. The author also reminds readers that simple cosmetic checks of your gear could save the cost of a new bow. A ding or crack can allow moisture to seep into the laminations. Superglue is his favorite proactive fix for such bow maintenance issues.

It is prudent for even longtime shooters to, on occasion, study their bow tuning techniques and their shooting form. This book came out at a perfect time for this reviewer, as I was setting up a new (to me) bow. At times, I can be a ferocious snap shooter, so even as a twenty year archer it's never too late to step back and spend some serious time deconstructing and reconstructing the

whole process. Reading Sorrells' book was a strong reminder to do so. Hence the value of a book that may at first glance be seen as simply an introductory piece. Not so in the case of *A Guide to the Longbow*. This is a book for veterans and newbies alike.



## *Blood on My Hands*

Author: Gerard A. Cox

\$23.00 Hardcover/\$15.25

Paperback/\$9.99 Kindle Edition

Having shot his first big game animal well into his adult years, author Gerard Cox showed up late for the hunting party, but perhaps that makes this late bloomer better suited than some to offer a balanced body of work regarding our relationship with animals:

*As human beings in the world, we can avoid the extremes both of biblically-derived dominion, which treats all animals as means created for our own ends, and of Walt Disney-inspired sentimentality, which results in eating no creature that is cute.*

An acquaintance of this reviewer is employed by the Disney entertainment



empire and she, not surprisingly, takes deep offense to any contrary inferences directed at the anthropomorphic themes of the Disney films. Yet much of society's failure to grasp the basic processes of the natural world is certainly realized in certain overly sentimental movie making efforts. Such films often create a wide chasm between man and his place in nature. Embraced by the anti-hunter crowd, Disney's *Bambi* is a mawkish example of man as the invader of peaceful nature, as if nature is not in itself violent. Yet in other films, *The Lion King* for example, it is acceptable for large carnivores to kill to eat, but not for man. However, Cox wisely reminds the reader that man as hunter has for millennia been entwined within the ecosystem, not divorced from it.

However, as some cultures moved from hunter-gatherers to pastoralists, a connection to the land and animals was lost. Man carved and tilled the land and no longer lived in communion with it. The blood on our hands no longer emanated from wild animals we hunted. Man cleared his hunting grounds in order to raise domestic animals thereby giving author Cox strong reason to state:

*Pastoralists and agriculturists were no longer part of the land: they lived apart from it. They no longer were related to other animals.*

Chapter Three of *Blood on My Hands*, Putting Animals in Their Place may, at first glance, give the reader a false perception—that animals are creatures to be demeaned, falling far down the rungs of a human engineered ladder of self-defined superiority. *Au contraire*, Cox's actual intent is to put proponents of the animal rights agenda in their rightful place. He takes on Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* and Regan's attempt to define those that can morally assume self-responsibility (moral agents) and those who cannot act on their own behalf (moral patients) who may be animal or human:

*In attempting to give animals rights and thus make them more like us, Regan has paradoxically widened the gap between humans and other members of the animal kingdom.*

Of course, one of the leading argu-

ments from animal rightists is the suffering that humans inflict upon animals, wild or domestic. Any ethical bowhunter who has ever wounded or lost an animal surely must have contemplated the result of an errant arrow. Yet is it society's misdirected morals or our own conscience that seeks to harbor a deep measure of guilt in this instance? Or perhaps (with risk of exonerating the hunter from losing a bad arrow) should we simply return to our historical place as just another predator? Cox offers this sentiment:

*But I find something over-righteous in dwelling on animals' suffering: it smacks too much of a pornography of pain. In a state of nature, after all, predators kill with no regard for the suffering of their prey. Mother Nature is serenely unconcerned with sentience.*

Author Cox is more than adept in his effort to place man squarely in his rightful place in the natural order of things, as predator or as potential prey. He reminds the reader that we are part of the natural drama, not masters of it. Cox astutely invokes *Monster of God* author David Quammen whose words serve as a firm reminder to those hunters who have shared the woods, here or abroad, with our large cats and bears: *...alpha predators have kept us acutely aware of our membership within the natural world. They've done it by reminding us that to them we are just another flavor of meat.* Predator introductions have indeed stirred deep, controversial feelings in the past twenty years, from Florida to Montana. Yet one cannot deny that wild is that much wilder, knowing that the big carnivores are out there assuming their role as alpha predators. In recognition, and perhaps a profound dose of admiration, Cox states:

*Our newly informed self-knowledge appropriately takes the form of humility before animals more awesome than we are.*

*Blood on My Hands* encourages the reader to consider that perhaps we do not have to learn to hunt. Instead, we have to *re-learn to hunt*; a recovering of sorts of what is already stored deep in our DNA as hunter-gatherers. Cox goes as far as to say that *"hunting is a highly imaginative activity, one perhaps*

*more intuitive than rational."* Humans do have an innate need to feel connected to nature. Hence the phrase by some photographers, "I hunt with my camera." Not quite. The photographer is an observer. The hunter is a *participant*. Prior to his first true hunt, Cox spent the better part of three decades in the outdoors as a non-hunter and easily acknowledges that rather than being a participant he was *"just another ecotourist taking in the sights."*

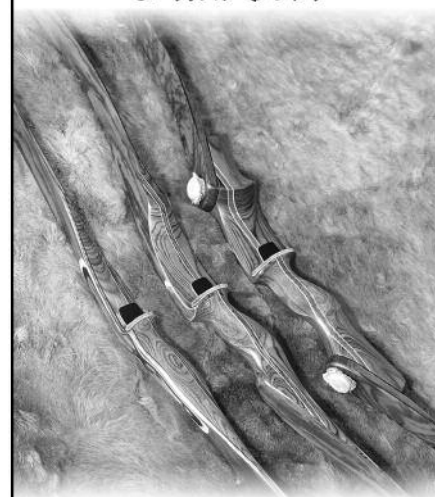
Gerard Cox has certainly done his research for this volume. The book closes with extensive documentation of his footnotes, followed by a bibliography, and finally (which more hunting authors should do) an index.

Two decades after Ted Kerasote's groundbreaking *Bloodties* was published, Gerard Cox's *Blood on My Hands* now comes along as another much needed read for the thinking man's hunter as well as non-hunters, who in turn, must be made aware of man's equitable place in the natural world. Cox leaves his readers with these hopeful words:

*Our planet is valuable beyond any meaningful calculation. We evolved here. The earth was not made for us; we were made for the earth. We have no other home.*



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# Tips From the Old Timer

By Dennis Kamstra



I have finally figured out a way to make my checked luggage “almost” destruction proof. A plastic 5-gallon bucket just fits into the bottom of a military duffle bag. This will add protection while still offering some flexibility. I have packed my takedown bow and arrows in the bucket (surrounded by hunting clothes), and everything arrived in good shape. For extra protection, you can use a second plastic bucket on the top end of the duffle. This combination also makes for an innocuous looking piece of luggage that is less likely to attract attention by thieves. Plus, you will always find a use for the bucket on the other end of your travels.

\* \* \*

On a recent safari into Zimbabwe, I came across another hunter who shared a story worth remembering. He was over 300 km in the bush when his fan belt snapped. To his surprise, he could not find his spare fan belt. He was in a real pickle, as it was a good three-day hike to the nearest town with spares. In desperation, he took two thick plastic zip ties, hooked them together, slipped them over the pulleys and cinched them as tight as he could. Not only was he able to make it to the nearest town, but since there were no spares available there, he continued another 120 km to the next town, which had a spare fan belt. Goes to show that one cannot have

enough plastic ties, especially the long ones. You can always cut the long ones for shorter jobs.

\* \* \*

Ace Hardware stores carry a product we all need in our toolbox: Oxy-Guard. This unique product comes in a spray can and can be used to protect all electrical connections. When properly applied, Oxy-Guard will prevent corrosion of any electrical connection (12 v, 110 v, or 220 v). I have found it invaluable when sprayed on taillight connections and trailer/vehicle connection plugs. This is especially useful if you spend a lot of time near salt water. Also on the subject to taillights, next time your bulb burns out, replace it with an LED light. These little guys will last for years and they pull a very small amp load. Just remember to spray the connections with Oxy-Guard.

\* \* \*

On a recent hunt I contracted a bad chest cold. I woke up in the middle of the night with uncontrollable coughing fits that were so bad I woke up everyone in camp. The next morning, a client handed me a small jar of Vicks and told me to put a generous amount on the “bottom of my feet” before I went to bed. I’ll be damned if it did not stop the coughing, and I had a peaceful night’s sleep. I suppose it has something to do with reflexology. I have since mentioned

this to others, and they had also heard of this remedy. So, what have you got to lose? If nothing else it will soften your calloused feet.

\* \* \*

Last season I was winching a dead hippo out of a lake and my winch cable got frayed when passing over some large rocks. Every time I subsequently pulled the winch cable from the spool I got my hands cut (too dumb to put on gloves first!). So, I decided to replace the cable. The proprietor of our local 4x4 shop suggested that I switch to synthetic winch line instead of steel cable. He must have been a great salesman since he talked me into purchasing a synthetic rope for \$300! Now, I must admit that this rope has a lot going for it. It will handle an impressive 10.7 tons, it is very lightweight, and if it breaks you can splice it back together (with splicing tool that is included), making it as strong as new. Speaking of breaking a winch cable: Get everyone well away from the cable when pulling a load. If a steel cable snaps, it can whiplash backward with enough force to take off body parts! Here’s another good excuse for purchasing a synthetic rope (at least it should be a good enough excuse to convince your wife).

If you are ever fortunate enough to harvest a large, heavy animal (big elk, moose, buffalo, hippo, or even elephant) you will find it very cumbersome to “position” this beast for proper photographs. If you need to roll it into an upright position, simply make two parallel cuts on the off side of the animal, near the backbone approximately two inches apart and six inches long. Slip the hook of your winch cable between these two cuts and around the two-inch strip of hide and winch the animal into the appropriate photo position. The thick hide will easily support the weight.

\* \* \*

I do quite a bit of traveling with a camp trailer and have learned some lessons worth passing on. Less expensive trailers often come with a leaf spring suspension (4 to 8 leaves) and no shock absorbers. This setup is simply not ade-



quate for hard work over rough terrain. I remember using such a trailer (yep, because I'm cheap) in some heavy sand. In order to keep from getting stuck in the sand, I had to keep up my RPMs and speed. The trailer started bouncing so badly that I snapped a five leaf spring in half. By adding shock absorbers to the trailer axle, you can avoid this problem.

If you do this as an "after-market" project, be sure to match your shocks to the springs. Any reliable fitment shop can advise you on which shocks to install. While you're at it, be sure you have springs high enough so that the trailer bottom is higher than the bottom of your tow vehicle. If not, you will high center your trailer when going through deep sand or mud, making it all but impossible to proceed. Unhooking your trailer in knee deep mud is no fun (been there, done that!).

\* \* \*

I know that all of us traditional bow hunters only use map and compass to navigate. Some may even use the sun and stars to find your way in and out of the woods. However some of us slip a GPS into our pack while no one is looking. If you are one of those geographically challenged people (like me), pay particular attention to the "settings" menu when you first set up your unit. If you see an option to select "Avoidances", be certain this option is turned OFF. Basically, when this option is selected, the GPS will try to avoid toll roads, major highways, unpaved roads and a few other things that do not leave much to drive on. Bottom line, the best overall setting is "Fastest Time" and not "Shortest Distance."

\* \* \*

Many of us use taxidermy to record our memorable hunts. Some of us have extensive collections and others more modest ones. But regardless of size, there is significant expense incurred. If you have a collection, is it insured? If not, you should, as many insurance companies will not cover the loss of taxidermy mounts if they are not specifically listed. If you have a modest collection, you can simply increase the amount of "unscheduled" property. The insurance companies are obliged to honor any unscheduled property loss up

to the amount covered in your policy. However, if you ever want to sell or donate your collection, you should definitely get an official appraisal. Appraisals for donations over \$5000 are required by the IRS. A trophy is appraised on a percentage basis. The percentage is based on the average number of trophies taken on a particular trip. This number is divided into the price of the hunt and then credited to each trophy on a proportional basis. For this reason, it is very important that you keep meticulous records on the cost of each hunt (where the trophy was taken, cost of travel, licenses, shipping costs, guiding, etc.). If you retain all receipts and have accompanying photos, both insurance companies and the IRS will be satisfied.

When I moved from the USA to South Africa, I faced a dilemma concerning my taxidermy collection (over 45 mounts). The shipping costs were staggering and I simply did not have the room to display them at our African home. The sale or donation of these mounts was simply out of the question as they represented a lifetime of hunting. I finally contacted a large sporting goods chain and entered into a contract by which they would display the mounts in one of their stores for a minimum of five years. They were also required to insure them against fire or loss, and to have them professionally cleaned once a year. For this, an official appraisal was required. Once all the paperwork was completed, I now have peace of mind that all my "babies" are well cared for. This arrangement allows others to enjoy the trophies as well. When I pass on to the Happy Hunting Grounds, all the necessary paperwork has been completed if my heirs decide to sell or donate the mounts. Donating is a way of legally avoiding estate taxes. Kind of sobering thoughts, but that's what you do when you get old!

*Dennis is a licensed professional hunter based in South Africa where he conducts hunting and photographic safaris. His e-mail address is safari-den@aol.com.*



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# Competitive Hunting

Several years ago I was invited to participate in a bowfishing tournament. It was a nighttime event and would involve spending dusk until dawn with a friend on his boat chasing whatever legal rough fish we could find on a large Southern Illinois impound lake. Since I love bowfishing I quickly accepted, but it didn't take long before I started wondering if I'd made the right decision. I'm usually very careful not to add a competitive element to my love of hunting.

When I was a kid there was a coffee can in our family's hunting cabin. Anytime someone missed a shot, they had to put a quarter in it. At the end of the season, whoever had killed the biggest deer got the change. There was never much money in the can, and I don't recall anyone taking it seriously. It was just a fun little thing that started long before I was born.

I used to think big buck contests were like that coffee can at the cabin.

Then one day I watched a hunter curse an archery shop employee for not scoring his buck high enough to win their contest. Suddenly the deer he showed so much pride in earlier was something he said he might as well toss in the trash. I think that was the first time I ever saw the ugliness of what can happen when you make a contest out of killing.

A number of years later I discovered Internet hunting sites and their corresponding message boards. Aside from the occasional tidbit of useful information, I found that a portion of the hunting community had taken competition to a new level. Several sites had hunting leagues where folks were grouped into teams and earned a certain number of points for killing various things. The more you kill, the more points you get. I spent just enough time reading the malicious infighting between competitors to realize this was something I felt was best to avoid.

I grew up viewing bowfishing as a pastime people enjoyed as a fun way to bowhunt during the off-season. It wasn't until I found those Internet sites that I ever heard of such a thing as a bowfishing tournament. I suppose it never occurred to me that anyone would take shooting rough fish all that seriously, much less make a competition of it. I was wrong.

The online comments I saw about bowfishing tournaments ranged from basic information on rules to profanity about other people's boats, bows, shooting abilities, and kill totals. Whereas I viewed bowfishing as something I did as a casual hobby, some of these folks acted as if their entire identities revolved around how many dead fish they could stuff into the 55-gallon barrels on their boats. Not surprisingly, some of the folks in the online hunting leagues I saw acted the same way about whatever they were killing.

Some things in life I don't feel I need to experience firsthand in order to form an accurate opinion. I've never had a root canal without anesthesia, but I feel safe in saying I wouldn't enjoy it. But since I had already committed to entering the bowfishing tournament with my friend, I felt it best to follow through. Besides, all proceeds were going to help the parents of a recently deceased young man who enjoyed the outdoors, so at least it was for a good cause. If any prize money were to come my way, I would redirect it toward them as well.

My friend and I searched for carp and other rough fish throughout the night, and by dawn we had a grand total of three in the boat. I personally couldn't have cared less about fish totals or tournament results. While I usually enjoy bowfishing a lot, I was far less than enthusiastic that night. The whole outing felt more like work than fun, and I couldn't wait for it to be over.

After the awards ceremony, my friend and I decided to walk the banks of the lake's spillway and see if we could introduce our arrows to a few carp and gar before the long drive home. It didn't take long before my normal love of bowfishing returned and I found myself pacing up and down the shoreline looking for hidden fish like a pointer searching out pheasants.

I love competition, especially when it comes to archery. I also love bowhunting. But as I watched the highway race beneath me through the windshield of my friend's truck, I decided it would be best to keep my involvement in those two activities as far apart as possible. To each his own, but competitive hunting just isn't my thing.

*TBM contributor Jason Wesbrock makes his home in Illinois, where he lives with his wife Christine and daughter Rachel.*

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